

WEB POWER:  
EXAMINING WORLD WIDE WEB USE AND ITS EFFECTS ON  
DECISION-MAKING POWER AND ROLES IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

by

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(Under the Direction of Prof. Lynne Sallot)

ABSTRACT

Using both a national focus groups and email survey, this study examined the ways public relations practitioners are using the World Wide Web to gain power and enact different roles in their organizations. The qualitative and quantitative results of this study both suggest that practitioners are effectively using the World Wide Web for issues management, research and evaluation, and to improve productivity and efficiency.

However, findings remain mixed regarding the effects of this use. While practitioners were found to have significantly increased their levels of power by using the Web for improved issues management, productivity and efficiency, no relationships were found between research and evaluation and greater levels of power, challenging the a priori assumption that research and evaluation enhances power.

INDEX WORDS: Public Relations, New Technologies, Internet, World Wide Web, Power, Roles, Issues Management

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DEDICATION

To Leslie and Jane Shelby

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## Introduction/Chapter Overview

Before the invention of the World Wide Web, a collection of academics and scientists populated the Internet, exchanging highly technical information in a textual format. However, with the creation of the Web in a Swiss particle physics laboratory in 1990, a new medium was born (Sherwin & Avila, 1997). Today more than 457 million people have access to the Internet worldwide, with 254 million active users (Nielsen/Netratings, 2002). Fifty million people are online daily in the United States alone (Media Metrix, 2002), and census numbers show two million new users are coming online each month (Report: More than 50 percent of U.S. on Internet, 2002). The UCLA Internet Project recently showed that 72.3 percent of Americans were online in 2001, up from 66.9 percent the previous year. For the first time in over 30 years of mass communication research, overall television viewing was down among Americans, with Internet users watching approximately four hours less per week than those not connected to the Internet (UCLA Internet Project, 2002). Twenty percent of the current audience are accessing the Web from broadband "always on" connections (Nielsen/Netratings, 2002).

Public relations practitioners are heavier users of the Internet than the average person. In a recent international email study released by the Institute for Public Relations, Wright (2002) found that 98 percent of public relations practitioners agree that the Internet is having an impact on the practice of public relations. Most (86 percent) agree that this impact has been positive. These practitioners report going online 5.8 days during an average week and spending between 15 and 19 hours per week online. Perhaps most indicative of the rise of the Internet in public relations, these respondents indicated that email was now the most popular way to provide information to journalists. Kruckeberg (2001) maintains that public relations practitioners will be charged with preparing society for the massive cultural changes that rapidly developing communication technology will bring about:

At the forefront of those who must understand the societal impact of communication technology are public relations practitioners; they must reconcile their organizations' ongoing relationships with a range of seemingly amorphous publics that are evolving within a global-yet multicultural and highly diverse-society

that shows little inclination toward becoming a global community. (p. 146)

With the rise of Internet use among both practitioners and the publics they target, the World Wide Web is fast becoming an important medium for public relations. Public relations practitioners have consistently lagged behind in adopting new technologies (Anderson & Reagan, 1992; Hill & White, 2000; Ledbetter & Warner, 1999; Porter, Sallot, Cameron & Shamp, 1999, 2001; Springston, 2001; White & Raman, 2000) or have used technology incorrectly and to the detriment of the profession (Marken, 2001). However, research has shown the Web is providing numerous opportunities for practitioners to assume powerful decision-making roles within organizations (Johnson, 1997; Thomsen, 1995; Porter et al., 1999, 2001; Springston, 2001; Wright, 2002). Yet, previous studies have failed to operationalize power and have used outdated roles measures. Kruckeberg (2001) states that public relations practitioners must first learn about themselves and the profession as a whole before they can represent their organizations's world views:

For public relations to make its maximum contribution, not only to client corporations, but also to a rapidly

changing world that demands appropriate relationship building and community building, public relations practitioners must know who they are and what they believe before they can help corporations define themselves and defend their role in a rapidly changing multi cultural and diverse global society. (p. 156)

In that spirit, this study will investigate how practitioners' use of the World Wide Web affects practitioner roles and decision-making power in public relations.

Chapter I will review the literature on public relations and new technologies, particularly the World Wide Web. Chapter II will cover the literature relating to public relations and power, while Chapter III will review the literature relating to public relations and roles. Chapter IV will outline the hypothesis and research questions pursued in this study. Chapter V will describe the methodology. Chapter VI will discuss the qualitative results, while Chapter VII details the quantitative results of this study. Finally, Chapter VIII presents the conclusions of this study.

## Chapter I

### New Technologies and Public Relations



### The Web and Public Relations

The Web holds enormous potential for the practice of public relations. Practitioners can use the Web for observing the competition, conducting industry research, monitoring the recent news, searching for archived news stories, and finding email addresses for potential media contacts (Sherwin and Avila, 1997). They can easily gather data from publics through online forms that feed information into databases. While allowing target publics to manipulate data through online calculators, etc., practitioners can present their own information in a customizable, multimedia fashion, through video, audio and live broadcasts. Finally, practitioners can communicate directly with publics through Web-based discussion forums, bypassing traditional media outlets (Holtz, 1999). With the advent of the Web, some practitioners have declared the traditional press release dead (Ochman, 2000). At the least, public relations materials have taken a somewhat abbreviated form with the wealth of information available online (Geibel, 1999). Komenar (1997) stated public relations is the key to incorporating a successful Web presence into an overall promotional plan:

Public relations is not always given its due in the midst of the frenetic excitement over glitzy new technologies and eye-catching advertising campaigns. Nevertheless, it is the backbone along which all of the branding and image messages must be built in order to be strong, coherent, and intentionally guided." (p. 132)

In a qualitative study of practitioner use of online technologies, Johnson (1997) set out to "investigate technology and practitioner roles and their ability to carry out two-way communication" (p. 215). For her study, Johnson interviewed 17 practitioners selected from the membership of PRSA in a major southeastern United States metropolitan area. She questioned the subjects on their challenges, constraints and benefits derived from the uses of new technologies in public relations. Practitioners felt that the Internet improved productivity and efficiencies and research and evaluation possibilities. Lastly, practitioners thought the Internet was improving two-way communication. Johnson concluded that new technologies help public relations enact the manager role:

Empowering technicians with more interactive media improves two-way symmetric communication, coaxing them toward management role enactment. Although the greatest impact of new technology is on management role enactment, new media have the capability of shifting more public relations practitioners from technician roles to manager roles. (p. 234)

Likewise, in their study of relationship marketing, Petrison and Wang (1993) found that through online database marketing and database media relations, new technologies offer public relations practitioners an opportunity to "extend their responsibilities as well as more efficiently manage and evaluate their core operations" (p. 235). Petrison and Wang said that practitioners can "increase the importance and prestige of the public relations function within marketing functions" (p. 242). Chikudate (1996) pointed out that online databases can be an effective tool in media relations, even monitoring the accuracy of reporting: "Media can be the watchdogs of corporations, but (using online databases,) corporations can be the watchdogs of media today" (p. 187).

Thomsen (1995) interviewed 17 practitioners in 12 organizations to examine how public relations practitioners use online databases for issues management to enact the manager role in organizations. He characterized online databases as collections of text and images updated periodically and accessible from remote computer terminals (e.g. Lexis-Nexis, etc.). Thomsen found that practitioners felt that they were able to intercept issues earlier and develop more proactive strategies. He also found that practitioners were able to gain autonomy and decision-making power as boundary spanners and "information entrepreneurs."

Building on Thomsen's work, Porter, Sallot, Cameron and Shamp (1999, 2001) surveyed 152 practitioners and found that practitioners were using online databases (mostly World Wide Web-based) to enact management roles by responding more effectively to their environments, by conducting more formal research, and by improving two-way communications between internal and external environments. However, these researchers also found that few practitioners were using new technologies to improve their work environments.

### Public Relations Practitioners Still "Laggards" in Technology Use

While the Web offers great potential for public relations, practitioners may not be taking full advantage of these capabilities. In fact, practitioners have a history of being late adopters when it comes to technology. Prior to the Web's commercial adoption, Anderson and Reagan (1992) surveyed 104 practitioners in the state of Washington to see how public relations roles related to use of new technologies. Respondents were asked how often they used word processing, desktop publishing, electronic bulletin boards, electronic mail, internal databases and external databases, facsimile, teleconferencing, spreadsheet, and accounting software.

Technicians were found to use new technologies to enhance their job responsibilities, such as the production of news releases, graphics and literature searches, while managers were found to use technology for more "strategic" purposes, such as budgeting and statistical database searches for market and demographic data. Managers also used new technologies for setting communication goals and new product launches (Anderson & Reagan, 1992). However, these researchers found practitioners to be "laggards" in adopting new technologies.

More recent research shows this trend continuing. According to Eric Ward, president of URLWire, who represents Amazon.com and consults for Burston-Marsteller, the Internet has "blind sided" traditional public relations (Ledbetter & Warner, 1999). Practitioners continue to use email less often regular mail and the fax choosing to rely on tried and true methods (Cantelmo, 2001).

In a study that comprised a content analysis of messages posted on a public relations online discussion list with 1,200 to 1,600 members and national survey of 750 practitioners, Springston (2001) assessed the impact of new technologies on individual public relations practitioners, organizations and the profession overall. Springston found that the Web and online interaction were by far the most mentioned categories (9-10,000 messages each).

However, Springston found that the public relations departments programmed the content for only 16 percent of Web sites. Practitioners had fairly strong agreement that the Internet provides both an opportunity for individuals and smaller organizations to compete with larger organizations and significant opportunities for the activists to influence public opinion. While most respondents agreed the Internet presents great opportunities

and tools for practitioners, many in the sample disagreed on whether practitioners were actually taking advantage of these opportunities.

Springston's results show how more work needs to be done to ascertain whether practitioners are using these technologies effectively. Springston found that new technology is having a significant effect on public relations. He concluded that although new technologies are having a significant effect on the field, respondents indicated they need additional training and that they suffer from information overload. In addition, while email and use of the World Wide Web appear common, the multimedia and interactive features of the Internet appear to be under-utilized:

The literature and this study remain mixed regarding new media technology's impact on the efficiency and productivity of public relations practitioners. As in other studies, respondents in this study report routine use of the Internet to scan the environment for issues and developing trends. However, practitioners appear relatively neutral regarding the role of new media technology in enhancing their careers. (p. 613)

### The World Wide Web: Practitioners Continue to Lag Behind

Public relations research on new technologies focusing specifically on the World Wide Web also supports the position that practitioners are not yet taking advantage of new technologies. White and Raman (1999) interviewed 22 "Web decision makers (WDM)" by telephone and found that communication professionals are conducting little research, planning or evaluation in programming Web sites. White and Raman identified those WDMs that planned the content and format of the sites as managers, while those WDMs that serve as Webmasters and maintain the site were labeled as technicians. Consequently, this study found that WDMs are more likely to occupy technician type roles. However, the authors did find that many WDMs often occupy both management and technician roles in their organizations,

In a later study, Hill and White (2000) interviewed a purposive sample of 13 participants that practiced public relations in an organization that had a Web site. Findings indicated that although practitioners see the Web as a valuable tool to enhance their organizations' images, the Web is not seen as a high priority because of its perceived lack of urgency and deadlines and lack of resources and support.



Ryan (1999) surveyed 150 PRSA members in 1999 and found ubiquitous use of the World Wide Web at 99 percent. However, whether practitioners are fully taking advantage of the Web's interactive features remains a question. He found that while 57 percent of practitioners were using the Web in surveillance of companies, only 49 percent were exploring database features at other sites and 39 percent were using the Web to monitor government activities. Just over half at 54 percent said they were "very involved" in "determining the objectives" of their companies' Web sites. Pavlik and Dozier (1996) found a possible cause for this lack of control as practitioners overwhelmingly stated that "encroachment from MIS departments" is the number one problem communication professionals list in dealing with the World Wide Web.

Practitioners' recent reluctance to embrace new technology is well documented (Abu Bakar, 2001). The Bohle Company (1999) surveyed 950 members of the PRSA Counselors Academy and found that even as agency practitioners are using the Internet as an integral part of their day-to-day activities, only half of the respondents provide regular training for their employees. Kent (2001), and Gower and Cho (2001), in advocating the inclusion of the Web in public

relations curricula, also pointed out the lack of training in this area. Similarly, Kent (2001) found that practitioners were not very adept at searching the Web. Esrock and Leichty (2000) found that although corporate Web pages tend to target investors, customers and the press, most sites target investors more than other publics. In an analysis of top corporate Web sites by 20 journalists, the Internet PR Guide (Corporate Web sites score low in PR, 2001) found that journalists find the information for which they are searching only 60 percent of the time. Garrison's (2000) survey of journalists found similar results. Furthermore, Marken (2001) suggests that although practitioners are actively using the Web, their "abuse" of technology is actually damaging the reputation of the public relations profession.

Some researchers have begun to examine the ways that practitioners misuse the Web at their own peril. From a rhetorical case study perspective, Heath (1998) analyzed the online dialogue between Shell Oil UK and Greenpeace International. He found that Greenpeace and Shell used their respective Web sites to carry on a town meeting "before the world." The Internet provided these two groups with an opportunity for constructive dialogue. He stated

that the Internet could be used as a "democratizing effect" whereby affordable access reduces the "deep pockets" bias in issues management. Issues discussants can share a "platform of fact and opinion" much more easily than was the case with conventional media. Heath concluded that emerging technologies offer many communication opportunities and threats to the practice of issues management.

Others have suggested the Web offers activist publics power by providing direct links to one another. Cozier and Witmer (2001) suggest that public use online communities to develop and maintain relationships. Ochman (2002) warned that practitioners need to embrace the Web's potential to provide "peer-to-peer" interaction. Coombs (1998) echoed this sentiment as he examined how the World Wide Web could change the power dynamic between an organization and its stakeholders. Using the case study approach, Coombs predicted that the Internet could be used to increase the power resources available to activists by increasing activists' power and density within the network and by reducing organizations' centrality within the network. To illustrate his point, Coombs analyzed "Flaming Fords" and "Free Burma" Web sites and subsequent media coverage. He found that activists used the Web in these two instances to

move past the media to provide a direct link between customers and activists in the Ford case and other activists, the government, customers and stockholders in the Burma case. He concluded the "network" effects of the Internet drastically alter the power dynamics of organizations and stakeholders.

However, Taylor, Kent and White (2001) found in a survey of 100 environmental organization Web sites that even activist organizations were making narrow use of the Web. Although activist organizations Web sites are set up for dialogic communication, most are using the medium simply to communicate with their member publics. Activist organizations seem to be ignoring the capacity of the Web to improve communication with the media.

Nevertheless, Taylor et al, agree that the Web has the potential to increase the power of activist groups and make activist concerns more salient to organizations. Others have suggested the Web places a great deal of power and reach into the hands of practitioners (Gaddis, 2001; Howard, 2000; Ihator, 2001; Lordan, 2001). A panel at the 1999 PRSA International Conference suggested that because the Web allows publics to actively choose their content, the Web empowers public relations in much the same way that

television empowers advertising (Hill, 1999). Consequently, the next chapter will focus on power issues in public relations.

Chapter II

Public Relations and Power

### Public Relations and Power

Without the power to participate in strategic decision-making, public relations practitioners are often relegated to staff positions, merely producing communication materials at the bidding of others. The power-control perspective holds that dominant coalitions control most of the decision-making power within organizations. Accordingly, most public relations research in new technologies has focused on how practitioners use new technology to obtain memberships in these inner circles (Johnson, 1997; Porter et al., 1999; 2001; Springston, 2001; Thomsen, 1995).

Public relations researchers have studied practitioner roles within organizations from this power-control perspective for more than 20 years. However, although numerous conceptualizations of power exist in the sociology literature (Raven, 1993; Raven, Schwarzwald & Koslowsky, 1998) and management literature (Finkelstein, 1992; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996), public relations research has typically failed to specifically operationalize power. Thus, this chapter will focus on the origins of power in strategic decision-making.

### Defining Decision-Making Power

Power is central to strategic choice (Child, 1972). Accordingly, Finkelstein (1992) operationalized and measured power as "the capacity of individual actors to exert their will" (p. 506). He pointed out that the less "programmable or easily specified a decision, the more non-bureaucratic influences are important" (p. 507). Such decisions are likely to pertain to the upper management of organizations, particularly decisions related to the abstract world of communication, public relations, and the World Wide Web.

According to Mumby (1988), communication defines organizational culture. Through communication, those in power can create ideologies that justify their actions, while denying the power of those not in power:

Power is exercised in an organization when one group is able to frame the interests (needs, concerns, world view) of other groups of other groups in terms of its own interests. In other words, the group in power can provide the frame of reference for all organizational activity. (p. 3)



Similarly, in Cyert and March's (1963) conceptualization of the power-control perspective, the most senior of the top managers, the "dominant coalition" wields the most power and consequently determines the values of the organization. While roles research in the public relations literature has consistently used Cyert and March's (1963) conceptualization of the "dominant coalition," this powerful group has since been identified as the "inner circle" (Thompson, 1967) and referred to almost exclusively in recent strategic management literature as "top management teams (TMTs)" (Mintzberg, 1979).

Finkelstein and Hambrick (1996) state that the key to studying power is to study the most powerful groups in organizations:

Perhaps of greatest importance is the role of power in TMTs. As opposed to typical work groups, one of the major functions of TMTs is to direct the behavior of others, an activity that both generates and uses power for each executive. In addition, top managers are expected to have a fundamental impact on organizations, but without the power to make decisions and direct others, they are unable to do so. Hence, it seems

particularly important to incorporate power in models of TMT interaction. Nevertheless, such a focus is rare in the literature to date. (p. 129)

#### Conceptualizing Power in Public Relations

Likewise, the public relations literature has barely scratched the surface of the power issue. Heath (1994) pointed out that power has implications for the entire organization. While the top management team may hold the most power, all other members of the organization are affected by that power. Therefore, researchers should study power at all levels in the organization:

Power is neither a universal concept running through all companies, nor merely the opinions of managers. It takes several forms: power as good, resource control, instinctive drive, political influence, charisma, and controlling others while maintaining personal autonomy. These versions of power exist not only in the thoughts of managers, but also for subordinates. They become enacted. Exhibits of power grow from the personae of role performance. (p. 132)

Even so, few researchers have attempted to measure the concept specifically, instead choosing to equate power with membership in the dominant coalition. For example, as part of the "Excellence" study of communication management (1992), Dozier found that dominant coalitions exert their power to maintain the status quo:

Communicators and others can play a role in changing aspects of an organization's culture. However, such change occurs slowly. In the Excellence study, the team found powerful forces at play whenever major changes occurred in the character of organizations. These powerful forces are generally-but not always-necessary to bring about change in organizations. (p. 185)

Plowman (1998) explored how practitioners can use conflict management to gain power as measured by membership in the dominant coalition. He found that practitioners will become part of the dominant coalition if they have experience using the conflict resolution in the two-way symmetrical model of public relations. However, although the author did not specifically operationalize practitioner

power, he defined the concept as the ability to "solve problems" (p. 241).

### Women and Power

Power also serves as a focal point for gender research pertaining to the "glass ceiling" in public relations. As women's representation in the field of public relations continues to grow, gender issues will become more important to the field. According to Hon, L.A. Grunig and Dozier (1992), "Issues of power lie at the heart of women's repression in organizations" (p. 427). Often, women are subjected to harassment based on power (Toth, 2001). In their analysis of the reasons behind sexual harassment in public relations, Serini, Toth, Wright and Emig (1998) found that although women are being promoted, they are being marginalized as managers. In a previous analysis of trends in roles research, Toth, Serini, Wright and Emig (1997) found that women are often given titles that require them to work harder but do not provide membership in the dominant coalition.

### Measuring Power Beyond Membership in the Dominant Coalition

Membership in the dominant coalition may mean power for public relations practitioners, but what causes a practitioner to become a member of the top management team in an organization? While power is often referenced in public relations, few researchers have operationalized the concept as it applies to internal relationships. L.A. Grunig (1990) called for a better understanding of power in public relations departments:

We lack a taxonomy of power of characteristics of power in public relations. We do not know from whence that power may come, nor can we say why some practitioners enjoy more influence than others in similar positions. (p. 115)

To remedy this situation, Grunig (1990, 1992) took a structural approach to power, comparing the Hage-Hull (1981) typology of organizational structure: traditional (small-scale, low-knowledge complexity), mechanical (large-scale, low-knowledge complexity), organic (small-scale, high-knowledge complexity), and mixed mechanical/organic (large-scale, high-knowledge complexity) to measures of power

operationalized as clearance and authority. Through both personal interviews and surveys, she found that although universal support and understanding existed for public relations across all types of organizations, respondents reported only limited amounts of authority within organizations. Unfortunately, the Hage-Hall typology did not prove useful, providing low correlations and explaining only 10 percent of the variance. However, several meaningful concepts emerged from this research.

Although Grunig operationalized authority by recording levels of budget authority and clearance and by recording the process by which communications are okayed for dissemination, she found that respondents could not distinguish between the concepts of "authority" and "clearance." Therefore, she grouped the variables together to form the variable "autonomy." Autonomy was then used as a proxy for power in organizations.

### Professionalism and Power

Professionalism is often referenced in the public relations literature dealing with power. Like the research dealing with power, professionalism research has failed to

use uniform measures. L.A. Grunig (1992) operationalized what she called "professionalism" by measuring levels of education and affiliation with professional groups.

In contrast, Kim and Hon (1998) did not include power in their examination of the professionalism of Korean public relations practitioners. Instead these researchers used J.E. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) models of public relations to operationalize professionalism. The symmetrical (negotiation) and asymmetrical (persuasion) two-way models of communication were labeled as more professional than the one-way communication of the publicity and public information models. In that study, Kim and Hon found that Korean practitioners who practice more professional (two-way) models of public relations experience higher levels of job satisfaction.

In their exploration of professionalism in public relations, Piezca and L'Etang (2001) explained that although research has focused on the differences between different types of practitioners, such as studies dealing with role and gender, public relations research has largely ignored the issue of power. Piezca and L'Etang point to the heavy influence of Grunig and Hunt's (1984) normative theory of

public relations in the literature as the reason for researchers' lack of focus on issues of practitioner power:

Yet, the relations between groups of people identified by other criteria, such as the amount of power they wield in an organization, have not generated the same level of analysis. This lack of interest in how people at work really relate and communicate might perhaps be explained by the strong normative drive present in public relations theorizing that focuses on proving that dialogue is the best way in which to enact work relations or even all relations. This situation can be explained convincingly as resulting from professionalization efforts that necessarily rely on an idealistic understanding of the profession. (p. 229)

Because this normative perspective has dominated the public relations literature, most power research in public relations has not specifically operationalized power for individual practitioners. Recent literature that has attempted to operationalize power has instead focused on external power and power differentials between organizations and activist publics (Broom, Casey & Ritchey, 2001; Grunig,



2001; Grunig & Huang, 2001; Heath, 1997; Smith & Ferguson, 2001; Springston & Keyton, 2001; Toth, 2001).

To focus on practitioner power, Piezca and L'Etang (2001) suggest examining public relations from a sociology of professions perspective. This perspective would involve operationalizing power:

Our analysis should help practitioners to understand their own roles, not simply in terms of managerial/technical levels or organizational position but also in a much broader context in terms of the power of the occupational role in society. We suggest further reflection on the nature of public relations expertise, particularly in view of its success in establishing itself as a distinct and commercially viable service would be beneficial. (p. 234)

Grunig and Hunt (1984) acknowledged that the type of public relations practiced may depend more on practitioner power than on any other factor. They also suggested further measuring power in public relations research. While Grunig (2001) operationalized power in his studies as "what the dominant coalition chooses" (p. 23), he admits having

trouble finding variables to explain why organizations select the models of public relations they choose to practice. He mentions power (along with culture) as one variable that "seemed most promising" (p. 23).

#### Finding a Power Taxonomy: Operationalizing Power in Strategic Management

Since the term "dominant coalition" was appropriated from the strategic management literature of the 1960s, looking at the latest strategic management literature on power is useful in developing a taxonomy of power for public relations. In developing "Upper Echelons" theory, Hambrick and Mason (1984) theorized that strategic choices are partially predicted by background characteristics of the top management team of an organization. Drawing from this literature and research on dominant coalitions, inner circles and top management teams, Finkelstein (1992) conceptualized and tested four types of decision-making power: structural, ownership, expert, and prestige.

Structural power encompasses a manager's formal position within an organization. Shareholdings indicate ownership power. Managerial shareholdings reduce outside

board influence. In addition, familial relationships often bypass formal structures within organizations.

Expertise reflects a manager's "ability to deal with environmental dependencies" (p. 513). In other words, the more contacts and relationships a manager develops within the external and internal work environment, the greater is his/her expert power. Others often seek out managers with expert power for advice on strategic decisions.

Prestige power results from status and reputation. Similar to boundary spanners, managers may gain power and information from external contacts. In addition, prestige power is gained through powerful friends and privileged backgrounds.

Because power "grows" from role performance (Heath, 1994), the next section will review roles research in public relations.

Chapter III

Public Relations Roles

### Mixed Results in Roles Research

J.E. Grunig and Hunt (1984) define public relations as the "management of communication between an organization and its publics." However, to truly practice effective communication, researchers have maintained that the public relations function must maintain membership in the dominant coalition of organizations (Dozier, L.A. Grunig & J.E. Grunig, 1995; L.A. Grunig, 1992). Accordingly, researchers have attempted to define the roles that lead practitioners to occupy this powerful position (Brody, 1985; Broom, 1982; Broom & Dozier, 1986; Broom & Smith, 1979; Close, 1980; Dozier, 1984, 1992; Leichty & Springston, 1996; Sullivan, Dozier & Hellweg, 1985; White & Dozier, 1992).

According to Dozier (1992), practitioner roles are "at the nexus of a network of concepts affecting professional achievements of practitioners, structures and processes of the function in organizations, and organizational capacities to dominate or cooperate with their environments" (p. 327). Researchers and professionals alike have long made the connection between public relations roles and environmental monitoring. As early as 1955, Edward Bernays (1961) urged public relations practitioners to "engineer consent" by

becoming part businessman (sic) and part social scientist. In 1979, H.W. Close (1980) delivered a speech to a PRSA chapter in Fort Mill, South Carolina, on "Public Relations as a Management Function." Close made some specific recommendations to the audience: "If you want management to look at you differently, you must bring to the conference table not only your technical skills but sound judgement, creative ideas, and a broad understanding of the organization and its environment" (p. 14). A review of the pertinent research and professional literature on roles and role research as related to professional status and issues management follows.

#### Development of the Role Scale

Broom and Smith (1979) first formally studied the issue of roles in public relations by developing a five-factor typology of roles for practitioners derived from an extensive literature review. Broom and Smith's original typology included expert-prescriber, technical services provider, communication process facilitator, problem-solving process facilitator and acceptant legitimizer.

Similar to the doctor-patient relationship, the expert prescriber serves an organization as the resident "public

relations expert" who provides solutions to public relations problems. These solutions are provided with little input from management. As the technical services provider, the practitioner serves the role of the "journalist-in-residence," who has no involvement in management or decision-making matters but performs specialized communication tasks ordered by management.

In the communication process facilitator role, the practitioner serves as a "go-between," providing management with the information needed to make important decisions. The problem-solving process facilitator helps organizations solve problems through planning and formal evaluation. The acceptant legitimizer provides the organization "empathetic support" and serves as a sort of cheerleader.

To test the typology, Broom and Smith (1979) placed graduate students trained in the five roles to act as "consultants" to undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in a public relations course. At the end of a five-week period, students were asked to evaluate their "consultants." The students consistently rated problem-solving process facilitator consultants higher than process facilitators and acceptant legitimizers. Broom and Smith projected that real-world clients would similarly be

expected to rate real-life practitioners in those roles highest.

To further his roles research, Broom (1982) asked a sample of 815 public relations practitioners drawn from the national PRSA membership how they "saw themselves" in a four-part typology similar to Broom and Smith's taxonomy developed in their 1979 study--expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem-solving process facilitator and communication technician. (Broom refined the typology of roles from Broom and Smith's earlier study, leaving out the ambiguous acceptant legitimizer.)

Broom's results showed that the technician role was not correlated with the other three roles. Practitioners who rated themselves high on the technician role scale tended to rate themselves much lower on the other three scales. Practitioners tended to rate themselves as either a technician or some combination of the other three roles. Because none of the other three management roles were found to be statistically distinct, Broom suggested reducing the roles scale to a two-part continuum with communication manager and communication technician at opposing end points.

In a survey of 136 public relations practitioners in the state of Washington, Reagan, Anderson, Sumner and Hill



(1989) confirmed Broom's findings that most public relations tasks fall under either of the two roles of manager and technician. Factor analysis found that the three management roles of expert prescriber, communication facilitator and problem-solving process facilitator significantly overlap and are not discrete. The authors' findings suggest that trying to divide the management role into three parts "does not make empirical sense" (Reagan, et al., 1989). Along the same lines, Hunt and Grunig (1984) proposed that the expert prescriber, communication facilitator, and problem-solving process facilitator roles are all subdivisions of the management role. Culbertson (1987) suggested that Grunig's two-way symmetrical model of public relations in particular provides a suitable environment for the enactment of these three management roles.

In addition to the major roles of manager and technician, Broom (1982) found two minor roles. Communication liaisons represent the company at public meetings and facilitate communication between publics and management of the company while not being held accountable for communication programs. Media relations specialists actively seek to place messages about their organizations in the mass media.

In a national survey of 600 PRSA members, Sullivan, Dozier and Hellweg (1982) set out to determine if Broom's four roles were hierarchically ordered as 1. Communication manager, 2. Communication liaison, 3. Media relations specialist, and 4. Communication technician. Using Broom's set of 24 role measures, Sullivan et al. (1982) measured the subjects' actual dominant role as well as their ideal role. The findings suggest that practitioners do perceive the roles as hierarchically ordered. Practitioners sought to achieve roles that were "higher" in the hierarchy.

In early roles research, the technician function seemed to be dominant in actual public relations practice. Cottone, Wakefield, Cottone and North (1985) surveyed 500 senior public relations executives working in both agency and corporate settings in the central United States to determine how those executives perceive the principal role and function of public relations. After subjecting 19 global tasks to factor analysis, the authors found that directors of corporate public relations functions ranked "event management" and "communication with publics" as more important than the "management" function to the practice of public relations (Cottone, et al., 1985).

Brody (1985) obtained similar results when, using Broom's (1982) four-division typology, he surveyed 100 of those responsible for the public relations activities at the 200 largest organizations in the Memphis, Tennessee metropolitan area. Brody asked the respondents to estimate the time they spent each week conducting technical vs. management/planning activities and to contrast these estimates with how much time they would have allocated to these tasks five years earlier and estimate time allocations five years in the future.

Practitioners reported spending most of their time in the technician role, while planning/management was reported to have accounted for the most growth, mainly in the areas of problem research/definition and program development/implementation categories. Internal communications problems were ranked next, while communication liaison and media relations showed little gains in time allocation. Respondents estimated this trend towards management role enactment to continue through the remainder of the 1980s. While respondents estimated that the technician role would become more demanding in the future, the technician role was estimated to become less dominant.

### Roles, Income, Decision Making and Job Satisfaction

Broom and Dozier (1986) updated Broom and Smith's 1979 roles study by returning to the original participants six years later with the same survey instrument. The authors hypothesized that job satisfaction would increase as practitioners moved from the technician role to the management role.

Broom and Dozier found that problem-solving process facilitators had the least number of years in their present positions and the lowest income, while expert prescribers had the highest income and the most experience in years. In addition, the survey found the expected pattern of professional development--increased frequencies in the manager role and decreased frequencies in the technician role over time. Roles were found to predict income, with managers earning significantly higher salaries than technicians. Roles were also found to predict more participation in decision-making. Practitioners who served as technicians throughout their careers could expect systematic exclusion from decision making. Broom and Dozier suggested that when public relations professionals were isolated from decision-making, public relations becomes a low-level support function.

### Other Perspectives on Roles

Bivins (1989) found fault with Broom and Dozier's role typology and suggested that practitioners should focus more on establishing a code of ethics in public relations similar to that of the legal profession. Bivins suggested that legal "roles of purpose" such as "advocate" and "adviser" should "subsume" any roles identified by Dozier and Broom. According to Bivins, until purpose is recognized, ethical guidelines cannot be established in public relations, and the practice will not be recognized as a profession.

Furthermore, some research has shown that not all practitioners pursue the management role as an ideal. In fact, many practitioners choose to spend their careers in the stability of the technician role, reporting great levels of job satisfaction (Broom & Dozier, 1986). According to Dozier and Gottesman (1982), some practitioners permanently self-select the technician role for creative reasons. These practitioners are happy in their roles because of the spontaneity in and emotional attachment to these positions. Although Dozier and Gottesman found that these "creative artist" practitioners do want more involvement in decision-making, these practitioners are reluctant to make the changes necessary to "climb the corporate ladder" at the

expense of familiarity and emotional stability (Broom & Dozier, 1982).

### Gender and Roles

Whether by choice or by subordination, research has shown that many women enact the technician role (Creedon, 1991; Broom, 1982). Broom's (1982) results revealed that while both men and women rated the expert-prescriber role highest, women rated the technician role a close second and men rated the technician role fourth out of four choices. Broom also classified practitioners by their own dominant role profiles. By comparing the mean scores across the four sets of role measures, 55 percent of men categorized themselves in the expert prescriber role, while 51 percent of women categorized themselves in the communication-technician role.

This segregation of women primarily in the technician role was later found to contribute to salary differences between male and female practitioners (Dozier, Chapo, & Sullivan, 1983). Women earned less than men regardless of education, professional experience, and tenure in present positions (Broom & Dozier, 1986).

Not all researchers have seen these gender differences to be negative. Taking a feminist position, Creedon (1991) likens the manager-technician roles continuum to a "trash compactor" approach that reduces a number of complex experiences into two hierarchical roles. She suggests that by denigrating the technician role and striving to make public relations a management function, women in public relations are denigrated because women predominantly serve the technician function. Rather than constant striving for a management role, Creedon suggests placing the technician role on the same hierarchical level as the management function.

Other evidence suggests that gender differences in role enactment may be diminishing. Comparing Broom and Smith's 1979 sample of 440 PRSA members with a 1991 sample of 203 PRSA members, Dozier and Broom (1995) linked gender, professional experience, and education of practitioners to role enactment in these two periods. The 1991 results showed that patterns of gender salary discrimination and gender role segregation may be breaking down in public relations. Differences in role and salary were more accounted for in 1991 by differences in professional experience than in 1979.

Nevertheless, the key findings from 1979 remain constant. Males continue to have more experience than women. Professional experience is positively related to manager role enactment. The dominant manager role is related to participation in management decision-making. Participation in management decision-making, then, is related to income and job satisfaction. Overall, practitioners were found to be moving more toward achieving management roles.

#### Roles and Encroachment

In addition to gender differences, role research has found many other reasons for practitioners enacting different roles in public relations. Surveying a national sample of 166 public relations managers, Lauzen (1992) examined how encroachment, the practice of assigning professionals with expertise in areas other than public relations to manage the public relations function, relates to roles played by public relations within organizations. Her results suggest that "the occurrence of encroachment may be lessened when the most senior public relations practitioner enacts the manager role and holds a powerful schema of the public relations function. The power inherent



in the public relations manager role should not be underestimated" (p. 62). In other words, the practitioner's aspirations to achieve the management level, competencies in management, as well as the belief by established management that public relations is a powerful tool, all decrease encroachment (Lauzen, 1992, Lauzen & Dozier, 1992).

In a survey of 262 public relations practitioners in the United States, Lauzen (1993) further found that the similarities between the marketing and public relations departments as well as the resource interdependencies caused by these similarities can lead to the more powerful department "taking over" the less powerful department. Lauzen explains why marketing involvement in public relations is damaging to the public relations effort. She wrote:

When public relations is incorporated into marketing, relationships with important organizational publics and constituencies suffer. No organizational function is charged with the task of "priming" these publics so that marketers can do a more effective and efficient job. In effect, marketing is working at cross purposes when it manages public relations. (p. 255)

### Roles and Use of Formal Research in Public Relations

What, then, are some of the ways that practitioner can avoid encroachment and subordination into the technician role? Research has shown that by heeding Bernays' (1961) advice and becoming part businessman and part social scientist, practitioners can become members of the dominant coalition. As early as 1981, in a survey of 333 members of four different professional public relations associations in San Diego, Dozier set out to determine if professional roles are related to practitioner's approaches to program evaluation. Dozier used a communication manager role scale and a communication technician role scale derived from a factor analysis of Broom's 1979 study of roles. Through factor analysis, Dozier identified three "styles" of program evaluation: scientific impact style (using focus groups, interviews and surveys, etc.), "seat-of-pants" style (using personal contacts and intuition), and scientific dissemination style (using clip files.)

Dozier found that the communication technician role was not related to any style of public relations research. In addition, he found communication manager roles positively correlated with seat-of-pants style and scientific impact style of evaluation. However, communication manager roles

were not found to be significantly correlated with scientific dissemination methods of evaluation. Further analysis identified media relations specialists as the only types of practitioners who are extensive users of scientific dissemination (Dozier, 1984).

In a telephone survey of 100 Texas PRSA members, Judd (1987) further examined the relationships between perceived role, formal research and organization type. Judd studied roles from the standpoint of individuals as well as from the point of view of the organization. Practitioners who perceived themselves in the manager role were found to be more likely to conduct formal research or evaluation than those practitioners who classified themselves as technicians. Practitioners who enacted the manager role were also more likely than technicians to be associated with organizations that conducted formal research or evaluation. Professionals enacting the management role were also more likely to be associated with those organizations that practice two-way communications rather than one-way communications (Judd, 1987).

Similarly, Sweep (1990), in a survey of 588 practitioners working at four-year colleges and universities, found that researchers enacting the management

role were more likely to conduct systematic, formal research.

#### Roles and Issues Management: Researching Complex Environments

Hunt and Grunig (1984) argue that public relations practitioners should go beyond one-way communication to interact with their environments. Practitioners can enact the management role and rely on those formal research techniques to help their organizations respond to increasingly complex environments. Hainsworth (1990) describes the opportunities for public relations in this area:

Few managers facing the rigors of organizational life in the closing decade of this century would doubt the need to systematically respond to the constant, intrusive demands of an increasingly diverse, dynamic, and competitive environment. (p. 8)

To help management respond to these challenging environments, White (1988) suggests that practitioners should find a way to change their vantage point to offer an impartial view of the organization from outside. Post, Murray, Dickie, and Mahon (1982), surveying nearly 400

small, medium and large businesses about their public affairs activities, found that adjusting to a dynamic environment requires establishing a corporate planning and public affairs "perspective." Post, et al. state the importance of public affairs departments:

The building of responsiveness capabilities into the business enterprise is a necessity in the modern political economy. As corporate strategic planning arose out the of the need to cope with changing and diverse economic environments, so has the public affairs function evolved as a means of dealing with issues arising from changing and diverse social and political climates. (p. 12)

Issues management provides practitioners with the tools needed to help companies deal with these environmental uncertainties (Jones & Chase, 1979). According to Hainsworth and Meng (1988), issues management is defined as the process that allows organizations to know, understand, and thus more effectively interact with their environments:

Issues management includes identifying potential issues, forming strategies to effectively influence those issues, making recommendations to senior

management, developing a corporate position on each issue, and monitoring each issue. (p. 28)

Issues management was first practiced as a way to respond to company criticism (Gaunt & Ollenburger, 1995). The Public Affairs Council defined issues management in 1978 as "a program which a company used to increase its knowledge of the public policy process and enhance the sophistication and effectiveness of its involvement in that process" (Heath & Cousino, 1990, p. 7).

Although issues management is approaching professional status, many companies still lack an issues management function. One reason issues management has not received much attention is that when issues management is conducted properly, no public attention ever comes to the issue at hand. Another possible explanation is that issues management is often confused with crisis communication or risk communication (Gaunt & Ollenburger, 1995).

However, issues management is not crisis management (Gaunt & Ollenburger, 1995). Issues management is a proactive activity whereby organizations attempt to identify issues and influence opinion before the issues have a negative effect on an organization. Crisis management

occurs after an issue has already become public and after negative public reaction (Hainsworth, 1990).

The process of issues management encompasses three concurrent processes: foresight--identifying, monitoring, analyzing and prioritizing what to think about; policy development--determining how to think about it; and advocacy--the use of action plans to advocate the company's position on it (Arrington & Sawaya, 1984).

Marx (1986) advocated issues management as the social conscience of organizations. He stated that success in strategic management depends upon "the effective integration of public issues management and corporate strategic planning" (p. 141). Marx asserts that advanced industrial societies should integrate social values with their economic roles. According to Marx, issues managers should be the main impetus behind this integration.

#### "Uncertain" Environments and Boundary Spanning: Power in the Public Relations Department

Issues management research is grounded in systems theory with open systems considered desirable. Katz and Kahn (1978) describe open systems in organizations as systems that allow the free flow of information into the organization and back into the environment through

continuous sequences of input, transformation and output. This cycle moves the organization toward a state of "dynamic homeostasis" with its "complex, uncertain" environment.

Post et al. (1982) suggest that "boundary spanning" provides the mechanism by which organizations can interact with their business environments. Boundary units are subsystems of organizations which monitor outside environments (Aldrich & Herker, 1977). Aldrich and Herker (1977) theorized that boundary spanners can gain power in an organization by interpreting the uncertain environment correctly or by converting the unknown into the known. Boundary spanners' power within their organizations should correlate with the accuracy of practitioner interpretations, the difficulty of the environment, and the cost of gathering information.

Lauzen and Dozier (1992) posited that the public relations manager role provides the "missing link" between uncertain environments and the consequences for the public relations function. In a survey of 262 public relations practitioners, the authors found that the range of publics and changeability of publics are positively related to the manager role. Lauzen and Dozier stated that:



Environmental factors do influence how the public relations function is performed in organizations. However, environmental influences do not permit reliable predictions of consequences internal to the organization when such predictions are made independently of power relationships explicated in the power-control perspective. (p. 218)

In other words, the environment only affects the role enactment of the public relations function if the organization and the dominant coalition are open to the company's environment.

In a national sample of 400 public relations practitioners, Lauzen (1995) examined how that one step in the issues management process, strategic issue diagnosis (SID), affects the power of the public relations function within an organization. Lauzen defines strategic issue diagnosis (SID) as "the process that decision makers use to understand environmental issues and events" (p. 287). Lauzen found that the number of shared values between practitioners and management is positively related to "active sense-making strategies (SID)" and negatively related to encroachment. Active SID is positively related

to accurate issue diagnosis and strategic change, and strategic change is also negatively related to encroachment.

According to White and Dozier (1992), members of organizations "identify-enact" the environments in which they conduct business. Public relations practitioners, unlike other organizational decision makers, are exposed not only to internal organizational values, but also to the values of external publics. As boundary spanners, public relations practitioners serve as "individuals who frequently interact with the organization's environment and who gather, select, and relay information from the environment to decision makers in the dominant coalition" (p. 93).

However, according to White and Dozier, boundary spanning has both managerial and technical components: "Putting newspaper and magazine clips about the organization in a folder for decision makers is a technical function. Public relations practitioners, however, fail to perform their role when their contribution to decision making is limited to such technical support" (p. 102). In order to enact the manager role, practitioners should interpret organizations' business environments for the dominant coalition (White & Dozier, 1992).

Dutton and Ottensmeyer (1987) described these differences between management and technician roles as "active" or "passive" issues management systems. Passive systems merely evaluate issues, and pass that information on to relevant decision makers. In contrast, active systems follow the same procedures, but they also formulate and implement responses.

Before practitioners can occupy an active or management role, Arrington and Sawaya (1984) explained that issues managers must earn their position, and that "they accrue authority as they earn it, as they prioritize issues and develop policy positions according to the strategic objectives of the company" (p. 153). In addition, Heath and Cousino (1990) point out that issues management "offers functions and a culture that can support broad-based programs to empower public relations by making it more useful" (p. 4). Hainsworth and Meng (1988) state that issues management is more likely to be performed by those higher, rather than lower, in the organizational hierarchy.

Dozier (1986) reported a similar significant relationship between environmental scanning and participation in the dominant coalition management decision making. Dozier found that practitioners can use

environmental scanning to reduce the substitutability of the public relations function within an organization, as well as the uncertainty of that organization's environment.

The environmental scanner has the hard data that are the poker chips of management participation and decision making. The scanner may parlay these chips, these hard data gleaned from environmental scanning, into management responsibilities. (p. 13)

#### Technicians and Issues Management

In a survey of issues managers and public relations managers and directors in 433 large U.S. companies, Lauzen (1994) set out to "examine how the role enacted by public relations practitioners is related to their responsibility for the steps in the issues management process" (p. 355). Her findings suggest that managers are primarily responsible for all stages of the issues management process, confirming Dozier's (1992) findings that the technician role is not related to informal scanning ("seat-of-the-pants approach") or scientific scanning.

Using the same sample of 433 companies, Lauzen and Dozier (1994) investigated whether issues management in organizations mediates the relationship between the

environmental complexity and the type of public relations practiced. Their findings indicated that the level of issues management dictated by the dominant coalition affects the organization's responsiveness to dynamic environments.

Practitioners are also more likely to be part of the dominant coalition when management is open to ideas from outside the organization and makes active use of issues management to function in a complex environment. Further, Lauzen and Dozier found that practitioners in the technician role may be excluded from issues management activities.

Through factor analysis, Dozier (1992) concluded that the variance in practitioner role activities can be accounted for in the two basic organizational roles-- *managers and technicians.*" Therefore, Dozier recommended collapsing Broom and Smith's original five-factor typology into that two-factor typology. Dozier conceptualized managers as those practitioners that handled problem-solving, planning, and policy tasks, while technicians handled more of production-oriented tasks. His findings suggested that the manager role leads to greater participation in management decision making, which leads to greater status, salaries and job satisfaction. Subsequent roles research focused on which public relations activities

caused practitioners to enact the management role (Dozier & Broom, 1995; Lauzen, 1992, 1995; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992; Toth, Serini, Wright & Emig, 1998) and how the management role enacted greater job satisfaction (Kim & Hon, 1998; Rentner & Bissland, 1990).

### Inconsistencies in Roles Research

However, roles research contains some inconsistencies. Broom and Dozier (1986) found in their longitudinal study that those practitioners that remained in the technician role between 1979 and 1985 reported the greatest increases in job satisfaction. Toth et al. (1998) found evidence of a third agency role emerging, which was similar to Broom's expert prescriber role. Furthermore, Leichty and Springston (1996) pointed out that the manager-technician roles were not mutually exclusive, with some research reporting correlations between the two roles as high as .40. Many practitioners reported high levels on both manager and technician scales, while still others reported low levels of both (see, for instance, Reagan, Anderson, Sumner & Hill, 1990).

### A New Roles Typology

Leichty and Springston (1996) found two problems with the manager/technician taxonomy. From the .40 correlation between the manager and technician roles, the authors speculated that a hybrid role may exist where practitioners enact both roles. Through cluster analysis, they examined how the role activities correlated for different practitioner groups.

Secondly, Leichty and Springston stated that the management role seemed to be nothing more than an "everything other than technical activities" classification (p. 468). Taking their cues from the literature on boundary spanning, where roles are separated according to informational and representational management functions (Aldrich & Herker, 1977), the researchers divided the management role into theoretically meaningful sub-roles by factor analyzing Dozier's previous public relations role items with additional items drawn from boundary-spanning literature.

In their analysis, Leichty and Springston found eight factors representing public relations activities, which they entitled advocacy, catalyst, gatekeeping, training, counsel, communication technician, formal research and information

acquisition. From the cluster analysis, five unique groups emerged who rank ordered the eight activities differently. The researchers then labeled the clusters according to how each group rank ordered activities as internals, generalists, externals, managers and outliers.

*Internals* reported low levels of contact with external publics, scoring high on technical activity, catalyst, and gatekeeping. In addition, internals scored low on advocacy, training, information acquisition and research. These practitioners "focused on coordinating the PR efforts of the organization" (p. 473).

Like internals, *generalists* scored high on technical activity and internal public relations. However, generalists were actively involved with external publics. Consequently, they scored high on advocacy, information acquisition and research. Generalists also reported a wide range of daily activities.

*Externals* served the opposite function as internals. While these practitioners also scored highest on technical activity, advocacy and information acquisition, externals also scored low on gatekeeping, PR counsel, PR catalyst, research and training. However, although externals



interacted with external publics frequently, they “played passive roles within their organizations” (p. 473).

Leichty and Springston validated these four meaningful roles by establishing predictive validity in comparing the clusters on several criterion variables. The researchers were able to predict successfully technical vs. managerial roles, education, years of experience, number of practitioners, centrality and function. Consequently, the authors were able to establish a new taxonomy, simplifying the data and identifying new relationships between roles and criterion variables.

In summary, despite extensive research regarding public relations roles, findings remain mixed. Based on their typology, Springston and Leichty have called for “further descriptive research” on roles. Perhaps by taking a step back, operationalizing power and comparing this new roles typology to power, this research can discover the keys to the World Wide Web empowering practitioners to participating in decision making in organizations. Furthermore, this research can use the strategic management literature on upper echelons to establish a taxonomy of power in public

relations. The next chapter outlines the hypotheses and research questions pursued in this study.

## Chapter IV

### Synthesis, Hypotheses, and Research Questions

This study will attempt to investigate whether the use of new technologies - specifically the World Wide Web - by practitioners of public relations has any effects on their decision-making power or their professional roles within their organizations and, if so, what those effects might be. Research hypotheses and questions for this study are drawn from the literature reviews presented in the preceding chapters, and are presented in the following section.

#### Power, Roles, Issues Management and the World Wide Web: Justification for This Study

In addition to presenting data in a graphically pleasing, personalizable, customizable form, the World Wide Web can be used to improve research and evaluation, issues management efforts, two-way communication between internal and external environments, and productivity and efficiency, thereby increasing the likelihood of manager role enactment in public relations (Chikudate, 1996; Hill & White, 2000; Johnson, 1997; Porter et al., 1999, 2001; Ramsey, 1993; Springston, 2001; Thomsen, 1995; White & Raman, 2000). Because the World Wide Web is a recent technological development, research has yet to show its full impact on the practice of public relations. However, preliminary results

suggest that practitioners could use the World Wide Web as an effective tool in their enacting the management role within organizations.

To examine how corporate public relations practitioners are using online databases and information technology to further issues management, Porter (1998) and Porter et al. (1999, 2001) surveyed 152 practitioners working in the Southeastern United States. This study found that issues managers, by using new technology to identify issues early in the issues cycle, could respond more effectively. Consequently, these practitioners established their own research agendas and acquired more autonomy within their organizations, thereby assuming more of a management role. Most practitioners were found to be using Web-based online databases, along with broader resources freely available on the Web.

This study will expand upon Porter's earlier study by assessing corporate and agency practitioners' use of the World Wide Web for research and evaluation, issues management and two-way communication, as compared with practitioners' participation in organizational decision making. In addition to the effects on individual decision making, the present study will also investigate whether the

World Wide Web has affected the status and power of the public relations function within organizations. The following table summarizes the proposed variables under examination in this study:

Summary of Variables

<b>World Wide Web Use</b>	<b>Roles</b>	<b>Power</b>
Research and Evaluation	Internals	Structural
Issues Management	Generalists	Expertise
Productivity and Efficiency	Externals	Prestige
	Managers	Ownership

#### Resulting Hypotheses and Research Questions

Four hypotheses and eleven research questions were derived from this literature review. The following section links these hypotheses to the specific literature that contributed to the predictions.

**H1: Greater levels of World Wide Web use by PR practitioners for research and evaluation lead to greater levels of power for practitioners.**

Research has shown the Web is providing numerous opportunities for practitioners to assume powerful decision-making roles within organizations (Johnson, 1997; Porter et

al., 1999, 2001; Thomsen, 1995; Springston, 2001; Wright, 2002). Porter (1998) and Porter et al. (1999, 2001) found that online database use correlated positively with management decision-making or structural power. Thomsen (1995) found that practitioners could use online databases to become "information entrepreneurs," a concept akin to expertise power. Springston (2001) and Gaddis (2001) found that practitioners can use new technologies to enhance their research and evaluation techniques. Finally, Porter (1998) and Porter et al. (1999, 2001) found that practitioners were using online databases-mostly World Wide Web-based-to enact management roles by monitoring and responding more effectively to their environments and by conducting more formal research.

In addition to helping practitioners to enact a management role, new technologies help practitioners manage and evaluate all aspects of their operations (Chikudate, 1996; Fiur, 1986; Johnson, 1997; Petrison & Wang, 1993; Ramsey, 1993; Thomsen, 1994, 1995). Practitioners who enact the decision-making roles are also more likely to associate with organizations that conduct evaluation than are those in technical roles (Judd, 1987).

**H2: Greater levels of World Wide Web use by PR practitioners for issues management lead to greater levels of power for practitioners.**

This hypothesis is predicted because researchers have found that practitioners gain power in organizations through effective issues management (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Arrington & Sawaya, 1984; Dozier, 1986; Dutton & Ottensmeyer, 1987; Hainsworth & Meng, 1988; Heath & Cousino, 1990; Lauzen, 1995; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992; White & Dozier, 1992). The World Wide Web offers practitioners an effective tool for issues identification and management (Johnson, 1997; Porter et al. 1999, 2001; Springston, 2001). By vastly improving the effectiveness of issues management and environmental scanning activities, the Web offers practitioners unprecedented opportunities to enact management roles within organizations (Johnson, 1997; Thomsen, 1994, 1995). Porter (1998) and Porter et al. (1999, 2001) found that practitioners were using Web-based online databases to enact management roles by responding more effectively to their environments.

Finally, Bessette (1997) argued that the Internet provides a new forum for the exchange of ideas through online communities. Practitioners can facilitate issues



management on the World Wide Web by monitoring and targeting these communities with two-way communication. Practitioners enacting the management role are more likely to practice two-way communications than one-way communications (Culbertson, 1987; Judd, 1987). Porter (1998) and Porter et al. (1999, 2001) found that public relations units using Web-based online databases practiced two-way communication significantly more than those units not using online databases. Online databases can be used to improve communications between internal and external environments, thereby increasing manager role enactment in public relations (Chikudate, 1996; Ramsey, 1993; Thomsen, 1994, 1995).

**H3: Greater levels of World Wide Web use by PR practitioners for productivity and efficiency lead to greater levels of power for practitioners.**

While practitioners have been found to be laggards in the past (Porter, 1998; Porter et al., 1999, 2001; Springston, 2001), this hypothesis is predicted because practitioner productivity and efficiency has been enhanced by email, online databases and the World Wide Web (Hill and

White, 2000; Johnson, 1997; Porter, 1998; Porter et al., 1999, 2001; Springston, 2001; Thomsen, 1995).

**H4: Greater levels of World Wide Web use among traditional managers lead to greater levels of decision-making power.**

Leichty and Springston (1996) found that simplifying practitioner roles into the manager/technician dichotomy resulted in the loss of "meaningful information" (p. 475). In previous studies, researchers were attempting to do just that (Johnson, 1997; Porter et al., 1999, 2001; Thomsen, 1995) to measure the effects of new technologies on the practice of public relations. While meaningful concepts emerged from these studies, this study is taking a different perspective and is attempting to examine the ways in which practitioners enacting the different roles, exemplified by the Leichty and Springston typology, use the World Wide Web to empower decision-making within organizations. According to Leichty and Springston (1996), the traditional manager role, in practicing advocacy, counsel, catalyst, gatekeeping and information acquisition, "bore resemblance to Dozier's (1992) communication manager" (p. 473). Therefore, this hypothesis is predicted because of the Web's empowerment of

managers in previous studies (Johnson, 1997; Porter et al., 1999, 2001; Thomsen, 1995). However, the other roles of generalists, externals, and internals cannot be predicted in hypotheses because they are hybrids of previous roles. Therefore, any links between these roles, power, and Web use will be examined as the following research question:

**RQ1: How do practitioners who play different roles use the World Wide Web to gain decision-making power?**

In addition, this study will explore the following research questions of interest:

**RQ2: How does PR practitioners' World Wide Web use relate to gender, age, professional tenure, race, education and income?**

**RQ3: Does practitioners' wireless access to the Web affect how practitioners conduct issues management?**

**RQ4: How does broadband access change practitioners' use of the World Wide Web?**

**RQ5: Do agency practitioners use the Web differently than corporate practitioners?**

**RQ6: Do practitioners' levels of Web use affect amount of time they spend analyzing issues?**

RQ7: How do levels of practitioners' Web use relate to email use?

RQ8: How does practitioners' Web use for revenue generation relate to overall Web use?

RQ9: How does practitioners' Web use for research relate to use of other types of research among practitioners?

RQ10: How are levels of practitioners' Web use related to levels of encroachment by IT or IS departments in online communications?

The next chapter discusses methodology for conducting these investigations.

Chapter V  
Methodology

This study was conducted to investigate how World Wide Web use by public relations practitioners affects the practice of public relations. To measure use of the World Wide Web by practitioners and how that use affects their decision-making power and management role enactment in public relations practice, the researcher conducted focus groups and a nationwide survey of public relations practitioners. The following section details the focus group method, the sampling method, the construction of the research instrument, and the methods employed to gather the data necessary for analysis.

#### Qualitative Methodology

Because the study of the World Wide Web is relatively new, a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) was taken to direct two focus groups about how the World Wide Web affects the practice of public relations. Focus groups were selected as a method in the hope that important concepts would arise through social interaction on this subject.

Prior to the administration of the survey, two one-hour sessions were held to test and confirm the direction of this

study, to refine the survey instrument, and to develop new areas of inquiry. One session took place immediately before the regular chapter meeting of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) in Los Angeles. The second session immediately followed the same chapter meeting. Both sessions were held in a conference room of the Omni Hotel in downtown Los Angeles, the same hotel as the PRSA meeting. The room was professionally equipped to record conversation. Each session lasted just over 60 minutes. The participants were recruited from the association's directory. Respondents were recruited via an email sent to the entire membership and an advertisement in the chapter newsletter. Subjects were compensated \$50 each for their time. Although the discussions were unstructured, a moderator's guide was constructed (see Appendix II), which provided a framework for the sessions. The author moderated both sessions. In the discussion at the end of qualitative results section in Chapter VI, the author will outline how these sessions shaped the questionnaire.

#### Focus Group Participants

Session one fielded six participants, while session two had seven participants. Four participants were from a

corporate background, and six worked in agencies. One participant was a sole practitioner working out of her home, one participant worked for a not-for-profit educational institution, and one participant worked for a professional association. Three participants of the sessions were men. One participant was an African-American woman. One woman was of Asian ancestry, and one woman was Hispanic. Experience ranged from one year in public relations to more than 25 years in the business. Corporate practitioners worked in the computer, health care and motion picture industries. One practitioner worked in a non-profit professional organization, while another worked in the communications office of a large area university. Agency size ranged from small "mom and pop" operations to representatives from several top five revenue producing international agencies.

#### Qualitative Coding/Data Analysis

The analysis involved listening to the audio tapes of each session three times. Each session was transcribed and notes taken during the sessions were extensively reviewed. Following Strauss and Corbin's (1994) method of grounded theory development, the transcripts of the focus groups were



coded line by line in open coding. Second, axial coding was used to find common concepts that emerged from the open coding and to make comparisons between those categories across sub groups. Selective coding was then used to select key concepts that emerged as dominant themes in the transcripts. Finally, the storyline was constructed from the dominant themes with a sensitivity toward subjects' comments and observations that would confirm or disprove expectations from the research literature and results from the previous study.

#### Subjects and Setting for the Quantitative Survey

This study also comprised a national survey of public relations practitioners. The survey was administered to practitioners by email that contained a link to a Web site with the survey instrument. The sample was selected using systematic random sampling techniques from the 2000/2001 Blue Book Directory, the most current, published national membership roster of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the largest professional association of public relations practitioners in the world. Following Wimmer and Dominick's (1997) suggestion for excellent results in multivariate studies to sample more than 1,000, this study

surveyed 4,000 randomly selected practitioners by starting in a random location and selecting every 5<sup>th</sup> member in the 20,000-member national directory. In addition, the researcher included in the sample 400 randomly selected practitioners from the more current 2002 membership roster of the Georgia Chapter of PRSA. Again, systematic random sampling procedures were employed by starting in a random location and selecting every 2<sup>nd</sup> member from this 800-member directory. The final sample consisted of 4,400 practitioners with a margin of error of 1.6.

### Procedures and Measures

The focus groups aided in the questionnaire design. (A thorough discussion of the qualitative results is presented in Chapter VI and of the quantitative results in Chapter VII). Prior to national distribution of the final survey instrument, several questionnaire items were eliminated when the survey was pilot tested with some professionals who had participated in the focus group discussions.

### Email Delivery of the Survey

The survey was distributed via email containing an embedded link to a survey site posted on the World Wide Web,

from which the data were collected. The cover email letter and the questionnaire were prepared by the researcher in consultation with some members of the dissertation committee. The cover emails to practitioners surveyed were distributed and the survey site was hosted by the Center for Advance Social Research at the University of Missouri. A copy of the cover email letter is in Appendix A. The emails were distributed in three waves, or batches, with the researcher and some members of the dissertation committee monitoring responses closely.

Clearly originating from the researcher, the cover email contained a subject line that stated "Grad Student Needs Your Help," and the text included contact information for the researcher and the chair of the dissertation committee. The cover email communicated the purpose and importance of the survey as well as a return deadline. Recipients were asked to complete the survey by clicking on the hypertext link embedded in the email. The link carried the survey participant directly from the email to the Internet survey site. Each respondent was assigned a unique Web address so that each participant could only complete the survey once.

To entice the sample to respond, in the cover email the researcher offered four free passes to any Disney resort in the country to a randomly selected participant. Also, 50 free Disney movie gifts were also offered to respondents. To further stimulate response, one follow-up email was sent to non-respondents three to six days after the initial email distribution.

Copy in the cover email guaranteed confidentiality of responses. However, anonymity was not guaranteed because surveys were tracked by IP address for follow-up purposes. A statement was included on the survey directing respondents with questions about their rights as research subjects to the Institutional Review Board, Office of the Vice President for Research, University of Georgia.

#### Measures of World Wide Web Use

*Research and Evaluation, Issues Management Communication and Productivity and Efficiency*

By vastly improving the effectiveness of research and evaluation, issues management communication and productivity and efficiency, the public relations literature indicates that new technologies offer practitioners unprecedented opportunities to gain power within organizations. This study will modify survey questions used by Porter et al.

(2001) relating to practitioners' use of online databases. In that study, five items were combined to form an index of online database use. Cronbach's alpha was .85 for the index. Since most respondents indicated they used the World Wide Web as an online database, the existing questions will be modified to measure World Wide Web use instead of online database use. In addition, the focus group results indicate that new items should be designed to gather further data regarding the use of the World Wide Web for research and evaluation, communication in issues management and productivity and efficiency. Previous questions will be altered and additional measures will be included that are suggested by the results of the focus groups.

#### Measures of Power

In developing "Upper Echelons" theory, Hambrick and Mason (1984) theorized that strategic choices are partially predicted by background characteristics of the top management team of an organization. Drawing from this literature and research on dominant coalitions, inner circles, and top management teams, Finkelstein (1992) conceptualized and tested four types of decision-making power: structural, ownership, expert, and prestige. When

tested for reliability and validity, structural, ownership, and prestige power received strong support, while expert power received moderate support.

Although Finkelstein (1992) argued that the four power measures should be applicable in most organizational settings, he admitted some adjustment of the measures may be required for specific environments. Because of a lack of correlation with perceived power, Finkelstein dropped expert power from his final study. Although this study will use Finkelstein's typology of power, several adjustments will be made to customize this study for public relations organizations. In addition, while his data was gathered through proxy statements to examine top management teams, this study will use survey data to gather power data on practitioners at various management levels for comparison purposes.

### Structural Power

Structural power encompasses a manager's formal position within an organization. Therefore, this study will use the same measure as did Finkelstein (1992), using three variables to create a structural power scale: percentage of

managers with higher titles, compensation and number of titles (Cronbach's  $\alpha=.83$ ).

#### Ownership Power

Shareholdings indicate ownership power. Managerial shareholdings reduce outside board influence. In addition, familial relationships often bypass formal structures within organizations. Therefore, this study will use Finkelstein's (1992) measures of ownership power: executive shares, family shares, founder or relative relationships (Cronbach's  $\alpha=.76$ ).

#### Expert Power

According to Finkelstein (1992) expertise reflects a manager's "ability to deal with environmental dependencies" (p. 513). In other words, the more contacts and relationships a manager develops within the external and internal work environment, the greater is his/her expert power. Others often seek out managers with expert power for advice on strategic decisions. This study will use Finkelstein's measures for expert power: number of functional areas with experience and number of sequential positions held in a firm (Cronbach's  $\alpha=.70$ ).

In his final analysis, Finkelstein dropped expertise power. Taking his difficulties into account and considering that this study deals only with public relations practitioners, the measure of critical expertise power will be replaced with L.A. Grunig's (1992) measure of levels of clearance required to approve communication materials. In addition, professional designations (such as APR and ABC) will be used as an additional measure of public relations expert power.

#### Prestige Power

Prestige power results from status and reputation. Similar to boundary spanners, managers may gain power and information from external contacts. In addition, prestige power is gained through powerful friends and privileged backgrounds. Therefore, this study will use Finkelstein's measure of prestige power: number of corporate board memberships, number of nonprofit board memberships, average Standard and Poor's board rating of corporate board memberships, and elite education as operationalized in the Finkelstein study (Cronbach's  $\alpha=.67$ ).



### Measures of Roles

Leichty and Springston's (1996) adaptation of Dozier's roles instrument will be used with the additional items from the boundary-spanning literature to categorize each practitioner into the five roles identified by those authors' previous analysis. Questions relating to the eight factors of advocacy (Cronbach's alpha=.77), PR catalyst (Cronbach's alpha=.84), gatekeeping (Cronbach's alpha=.78), PR training (Cronbach's alpha=.78), PR counsel (Cronbach's Alpha=.77), technical activity (Cronbach's Alpha=.72), research (Cronbach's Alpha=.59), and information acquisition (Cronbach's alpha=.84) will be used.

### Demographics

To investigate any links between individual characteristics and the use of the World Wide Web in public relations, standard demographic information will be gathered, such as gender, age, education, tenure, ethnicity, and personal income.

### Materials: Construction of the Survey Instrument

The survey instrument included 103 items. A copy of the questionnaire is in Appendix V. The items in Part I

included one multiple response question where practitioners were asked "Check all that apply" and one question where respondents were asked to select one item from a list of Internet connection speeds. The other three questions in Part I asked that respondents indicate how many hours per week they connected to the Internet with a Likert-type scale with endpoints of "0 hours per week" and "40+ hours per week."

Parts II, III, IV and V of the questionnaire included 62 questions with 5-point Likert-type scales with end points of "at no time" and "all the time" or "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree." Part III also included one rank order question, where respondents were asked to rank their use of the Web for different public relations tasks. Part IV included one question where respondents were asked to indicate their professional affiliations.

Part V included several multiple response questions and several questions asking for respondents to indicate numbers (employees, titles, etc.) to measure practitioners' power in their organizations.

In addition to nine demographic questions, Part VI included one item where respondents were asked to indicate

if they wanted to receive an executive summary of this study.

Individual items follow, grouped by sources and the topic areas the items are presumed to be measuring. Numbers preceding items are those assigned in the final survey instrument. The items in Part I (Table 5.1) were slightly modified items from a quantitative study by Wright (2002), unless indicated as original.

Table 5.1

**Part I: Internet Use**

The following questions measure your use of new technologies in your practice of public relations.

1. Of the following tools, which do you use to access the Internet? (Check all that apply).

Email

World Wide Web

Wireless Internet Device (Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), cell phone, etc.) [Original]

2. How many hours per week do you use email in your practice of public relations?

3. How many hours per week do you use the World Wide Web in your practice of public relations?

4. How many hours per week do you access the Internet through a wireless device (Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), cell phone, etc.?) [Original]

5. How does your office access the World Wide Web (please check one): Broadband (Cable, DSL, Cable, T3, T1, etc./Always On)  
Dial Up/Modem (56K or lower) [Original]

The items in Part II (Table 5.2) were slightly modified items from a quantitative study by Porter et al. (2001) and Porter (1998, 1999) and from quantitative studies from Springston (2001) and Thomsen (1995), and a qualitative study by Johnson (1997), unless indicated as original.

Table 5.2

## **Part II: World Wide Web Use**

The following questions will measure your use of the World Wide Web in your practice of public relations.

1. How often do you use the Web for research?
2. How often do you use the World Wide Web to monitor your competition?
3. How often do you use the Web to monitor the news in your practice of public relations?
4. How often do you use the Web to conduct research in preparation for public relations campaigns?
5. How often do you use the Web to prepare client and prospect presentations?
6. How often do you use the Web to "improve a pitch" by researching individual reporters and previous stories these reporters have written? [Original]
7. How often do you use the Web to evaluate your public relations efforts?
8. How often do you use the Web to track press release usage by the media?

9. How often do you use Web site traffic (e.g. number of Web site "hits," unique users, page views) to show results for your public relations efforts? [Original]

10. How often do you use subscriptions to customizable "news alerts" from Web sites to keep up on the latest news?

11. How often do you use the Web to **IDENTIFY** issues pertinent to your organization/clients?

12. How often do you use the Web to **MANAGE** those issues for your organization/clients?

13. How often do you use the Web to research public opinion by monitoring online communities (news groups, bulletin boards, etc.) [Original]

14. How often do you use the Web for two-way communication with your publics?

15. How often do you use the Web to target publics?  
[Original]

16. How often do you communicate with your publics by placing messages in appropriate interactive forums (bulletin boards, news groups, chat rooms, etc.) [Original]

17. How often do you attempt to place news stories on the Web? [Original]

The items in Part I (Table 5.3) were all original to this study and were formulated based on the results of the focus groups conducted previous to the survey.

Table 5.3

### **Part III: Role of the Web in Public Relations**

The following questions will measure your beliefs about the use of the World Wide Web in public relations. (Note: Email use is NOT considered part of World Wide Web use):

1. The World Wide Web is now a standard public relations tactic. [Original]

2. My organization has improved its use of the World Wide Web by purchasing firms that specialize in the Web.  
[Original]

3. My organization has improved its use of the Web by hiring outside consultants that specialize in the Web. [Original]

4. The fact that our Internet connection is "always on" has changed my practice of public relations significantly.  
[Original]

5. I have used the World Wide Web to keep up with breaking news while working in other applications at my computer.  
[Original]

6. The Web has reduced costs for my organization.  
[Original]

7. The Web has reduced my reliance on other forms of research (focus groups, phone surveys, library research, etc.) [Original]

8. I have no memory of public relations practice without the Internet. [Original]

9. I am concerned the Web reduces personal interaction.  
[Original]



10. The Web generates additional revenue for my organization. [Original]

11. The Web has reduced the time I have to analyze information before responding. [Original]

12. IT or IS departments no longer control the Web presence for my organization. [Original]

13. The Web eliminates intermediaries, making it easier for me to reach my publics. [Original]

14. The Web is useful in handling crisis situations. [Original]

15. Please rank order the following uses of the World Wide Web from (1) most important to (4) least important to you and your organization. Please place a zero (0) next to the uses that do not apply to you or your organization:

Research

Communication

Issues management

Evaluation [Original]

The items in Part IV (Table 5.4) were slightly modified items from a quantitative study by Leichty and Springston (1996), unless indicated as original.

Table 5.4

**Part IV: Roles**

The following questions will attempt to determine the role(s) you serve in your (client's) organization:

1. How often do you provide information **informally** to outsiders that will induce them to act favorably to your organization/clients?
2. How often do you provide information **informally** to groups outside your (client's) organization to create a favorable image?
3. How often do you provide information on a **formal** basis to groups outside your (client's) organization intended to create a favorable image?

4. How often do you provide information **formally** to outsiders that will induce them to act favorably to your (client's) organization?
5. How often do you represent your organization/clients at events and meetings?
6. How often do you take responsibility for success?
7. How often do you take responsibility for failure?
8. How often do you keep management/clients actively involved in public relations?
9. How often do you keep others in the (client's) organization informed about public relations matters?
10. How often do you operate as a catalyst for the involvement of non public relations personnel in public relations matters?

11. How often do you decide **WHEN** to transmit information acquired from outside your (client's) organization to others within your (client's) organization?

12. How often do you decide **WHAT** portions of information acquired from outside your (client's) organization to transmit to others within your (client's) organization?

13. How often do you decide **TO WHOM** within your (client's) organization to send information obtained from outside sources?

14. How often do you **informally** instruct others, not in PR, how to interact with people outside your (client's) organization?

15. How often do you **formally** instruct others, not in PR, how to interact with people outside your (client's) organization?

16. How often do you work with managers to increase their communication skills?

17. How often do you collaborate with non-public relations people to define and solve problems?

18. How often do you plan and recommend courses of action?

19. How often do you make communication policy decisions?

20. How often do you keep management/clients informed of public reactions?

21. How often do you produce pamphlets and brochures?

22. How often do you edit/rewrite communications for/from your organization/clients for grammar and spelling?

23. How often do you write public relations materials?

24. How often do you produce photography and graphics for your organization/clients?

25. How often do you conduct communication audits?

26. How often do you report public opinion survey results?

27. How often do you **FORMALLY** acquire information from sources or groups external to your organization/clients?

28. How often do you **INFORMALLY** acquire information from sources or groups external to your organization/clients?

29. Which of the following best describes your present affiliation in public relations?:

Agency

Sole practitioner

Corporate

Not-for-profit

Government

Education

Other [Original]

The items in Part V (Table 5.5) were slightly modified items from quantitative studies by Finkelstein (1996) and L.A. Grunig (1992), unless indicated as original.

Table 5.5

**Part V: Power**

The following questions measure your power in your organization.

1. How many people are employed full time in your organization?
2. How many full time employees (not counting board members) in your organization have higher titles than you?
3. What benefits does your compensation entail? Please check all that apply:
  - annual salary
  - stock options
  - health coverage
  - company car
  - life insurance
  - disability insurance
  - expense account
  - bonuses
  - Other

4. How many titles do you currently have?

Please type your title(s) here.

5. The Web has empowered me to be promoted into my current position. [Original]

6. What percentage of shares in your company do you and your family own?

None

Less than 1%

1 to 10%

11 to 20%

21 to 30%

31 to 40%

41 to 50%

51 to 60%

61 to 70%

71 to 80%

81 to 90%

91 to 100%

Not applicable



7. Are you related by marriage or kinship to the ownership of your organization?

Yes

No

8. Are you the founder or owner of your organization? Yes No

9. (If yes,) The Web has empowered me to own my own company.

[Original]

10. In how many different functional areas have you worked?

(Please specify number and then check all that apply)

Marketing

Finance

Legal

Public relations

Research

Strategic Planning

Other-Please specify

11. How many different positions have you held in your firm?

(Please specify number and then check all that apply)

Marketing

Finance

Legal

Public relations

Research

Strategic Planning

Other-Please specify

12. How many levels of clearance beyond you are required to approve communication materials you produce? (Original)

13. How many professional designations (APR, ABC, etc.) do you hold?

14. My informational use of the Web has empowered me as an expert in my organization. (Original)

15. On how many corporate boards do you serve?

16. On how many nonprofit boards do you serve?

17. The World Wide Web has enhanced my prestige as a practitioner. [Original]

### Gathering of Data

The first wave of 2,000 questionnaires were transmitted by email on February 26, 2002, with a deadline to respond by March 6, 2002. On March 4, 2002, approximately 1,722 follow-up messages were transmitted via electronic mail to non-respondents, with a revised reminder to respond by March 12, 2002. A second wave of 2,000 surveys was also transmitted on March 4, 2002, with a deadline of March 13, 2002. On March 7, 2002, follow-up messages were transmitted via electronic mail to non-respondents. Also on March 7, the third wave of 400 emails were submitted to the sample from the Georgia Chapter of PRSA. On March 11, 2002, approximately 380 follow-up emails were sent to non-respondents to this third wave.

The next chapter details the results of the focus groups conducted for this study. Chapter VII details the results from the survey.

Chapter VI

Qualitative Results

## Results/Discussion

The researcher's original direction of inquiry was confirmed by the focus sessions. Practitioners are using the Web extensively to enhance research and evaluation, two-way communication, productivity and efficiency and issues management. Most important to this research, the focus groups found that the Web is an integral and widely used tool in public relations.

### Web is now Standard Operating Procedure in Public Relations

Practitioners spoke of the Web as completely integrated into the practice of public relations. These practitioners see the Web as something practitioners must use in order to compete in today's dynamic business environment. Clients and management expect practitioners to handle any Web-related issues. Often a practitioner, when taking a new position, is first charged with revamping the Web presence as the first point of contact for external publics.

Particularly in the agency business, practitioners are not only expected to know about the Web, but to be experts, lending credence to the importance of expert power. Some agency practitioners in larger firms mentioned that their

firms has gone so far as to purchase Web expertise by acquiring smaller firms that specialize in Web consulting. Susan, an agency practitioner, says her firm often relies on these acquired firms:

If I don't have anyone in our office who is able to do something for our client, we can rely on this boutique company we have acquired and they can do anything you could possibly think of-stuff I would have no idea about...Because we acquired these boutique (Web) agencies, we have them come in and do training sessions for us. Even letting us know what they are able to do so if our client or the manager on the account thinks that something might be interesting to the client or more time efficient, or whatever, we either know how to do it or we know where can learn immediately how to do it.

Vickie, an account executive at a "top five" agency, described how agency practitioners are now required to thoroughly know the Web:

In PR, you have to know a lot about a lot of things. And you have to be able to sell that you know it. So when you're in a pitch for a client, you have

to speak intelligently about how a Web site is built and how we're going to do this and this and this, and it's going to be really great, and if you don't talk the talk, and you may be sitting across the table from somebody who does. And you could lose it right there. Because everyone expects you to build a Web site or maintain the one that's already there, or upgrade it, or this and that. You have to know the language. So I think it's put an added pressure in the sense that you don't just have to know PR really well. We have to know PR. We have to know the Web. We have to know everything and be able to speak on it.

Furthermore, the Web is now considered a standard public relations tactic when practitioners plan campaigns. Dawn, a senior level agency practitioner, describes how Web tactics are now common in campaign strategy discussions:

That's now one of the things we discuss when we are brainstorming campaigns. We'll say, "let's do a viral campaign," and it's amazing to me. Two years ago it wasn't a tactic that we would employ for campaigns.

In fact, according to several of the subjects, the Web has become a somewhat ubiquitous tool in public relations. Susan, an agency practitioner, said she uses the Web for every facet of her job:

I actually can't think of anything we don't use the Web for. Just as far as Internet - like for a worldwide company - having the Internet between our different offices helps with our team practices. You can go on and find out what different offices did five years ago if you have an RFP or something that you are responding to or that you need for a client.

Like Susan, many younger practitioners say they cannot imagine working without the Web. Miwa, a young and inexperienced agency practitioner, recently began her career in public relations:

I've only been working in PR for a year, so of course I'm very used to using the Web and always have used it since I started working. So it would seem weird if I didn't have access to it. I mean, I've done the whole looking for articles in libraries and whatnot, but since I've worked, it's always been a given that I



would be able to use the Web. So it would feel really odd.

### "The Web is the Ultimate Research Tool"

With the access the Web provides to unlimited amounts of information, perhaps the most discussed topic in both focus group sessions was the intensive use of the Web by practitioners for research purposes. According to Tom, head of public relations for a professional association, research is his main use of the Web, "personally for myself, I am using it all day long. I find it a tremendous research tool."

Practitioners use the Web equally for important primary research initiatives in their companies and mundane information such as driving directions or how to spell someone's name correctly. Vicky uses the Web to find routine details, substantially reducing the number of phone calls she has to make in a day, "I use it for filling in the blanks. A lot of times, rather than going back to them, because they are just overtaxed with work as it is, I just go to the Web."

Others have used the Web to easily get information without relying on the client. For example, using the Web,

Kay, a sole practitioner, wrote a brochure without ever speaking directly to the client:

I subcontracted out to write a brochure for someone else's client, you know what I'm saying? Like the someone else hired me to do the writing for it. So I didn't have any direct contact with the client. So all I did was, I looked at their Web site to learn about them. It's amazing. It's great.

Some practitioners went as far as to say that the Web had replaced their need to hire outside research firms. Dawn, an experienced agency practitioner, said that her agency now uses the Web for most of their research tasks:

We do all of our research now. I remember I had a book of state government agencies from like 1997 or something. And I used to, whenever I was looking for demographic data mostly, I'd have to call the different units, and now I can just go on and type it all in, it's instant. It's amazing.

#### Improved Productivity and Efficiency

Many practitioners also use the Web to improve productivity by bettering their pitches to media outlets by

researching reporters and past stories these reporters have written. Mandesa, an agency practitioner who specializes in media relations, says the Web has allowed her to stroke the egos of reporters:

We are constantly looking for ways to better our pitch and know what the reporter has written in the past - what the last few stories are that they have written, exactly what their beat is so you can bring up "I read the article you wrote on blah blah blah" to boost their ego. They like that. Obviously we are in the business of getting our clients media hits, and being able to focus our pitch to the particular reporters is all because of the Web, and knowing how they write stories, what they like to write about. It will even tell me how the reporter likes to receive the information, when they like getting phone calls, what their pet peeves are about PR people and everything.

Corporate practitioners use this same capability to better educate the management of their companies. A corporate practitioner with many years of experience in high-tech public relations, Betty often uses the Web to better inform management:

I know in the past when our CEO was interviewed there have been times that I have used the Web to get background information on the reporter to educate our CEO about who he will be dealing with, what kinds of articles he has written.

Kay also uses the Web to better her pitches to reporters:

I work at home, so in my own home at my own computer, I can read this newspaper, get to know what reporters are covering, the kind of stories that they're doing, so that I know how to tailor a pitch to a reporter. I mean, I can watch someone's work, you know, and call that reporter on the phone.

Many practitioners also mentioned how the Web had reduced their need to do traditional types of research. Dawn, an agency practitioner also at a "top five" firm, remembers the way public relations was practiced prior to the Web,

When I started in PR, we didn't have the Internet, so I went to the library, literally, and I remember pulling out books, and going through stuff, and the racks of

newspapers and magazines. It's how you did your research, and to be able to type anything in and find it, is amazing to me. I probably do it everyday for something.

Corporate practitioners use the Web to conduct primary research via surveillance of activist groups, speeding up the research process. The research capabilities of the Web have enabled the Web to move into the strategic management division of corporations, thereby increasing structural power. Karen, an experienced corporate practitioner, often uses the Web to observe her publics' communication activities:

A lot of these groups develop communities, and they are online, and they are posting messages to each other about their issues. I can just monitor groups that are of interest to us totally anonymously, and find out what they are saying about us and our products and our competitors, and what their concerns are and their issues are, and really help to plan public relations strategy for our organization and also see, really dramatically see, the mis-steps a lot of our competitors have made where they've done something

that's really offended the Asian community on some particular product, the way they launched it or whatever their practices were. You can learn so much from that information that years ago you'd do all these focus groups for.

#### Now a Standard Part of the Evaluation Process for Many

While not as universally as for research, many practitioners are also taking advantage of the Web's capabilities to better evaluate their campaigns. Because all activity on the Web is trackable via server logs, the Web has provided public relations practitioners with a tangible method for measuring results of campaigns. The Web allows Betty to trace public relations activities directly to outcomes such as lead generation:

Well you can measure the hits, too. When you have a landing page, you can measure the hits, and also what we go by is lead generation. So we have an enrollment form, and we are constantly adding to our database. That's the key to what we do is generating leads to our database. And so all of these things are intended to increase the number of leads so you have more people, and it qualifies the leads.

The universal access of the Web has allowed smaller organizations and even sole practitioners like Kay to easily conduct sophisticated evaluation that was previously only available to larger corporations and agencies:

It's an amazing tool. If, I mean, the absolute minimum thing that I use it for is to be able to read newspapers on another country in the world. I mean, without the Web I'd be gone to the library or newsstands. I don't know what I would be doing. I mean, it's just revolutionized tracking stories, mine and all other stories.

However, the Web's evaluation capabilities actually place an added burden on some practitioners to track public relations activities. Even so, Dawn says the Web gives her another way to prove to clients her agency's activities are effective:

I noticed that it's used as a measurement tool for a lot of our programs now. For the teen pregnancy work that we do, it's an initiative that's funded by a foundation, and as part of it, they have funded an evaluation team to track not only the other components

of the initiative but us, and how well we do our job. And so I have to monitor the hits to the Web site and send that to the evaluation team, and it's used as part of the report to the foundation about whether or not we are doing a good job with our money. So that's definitely a new thing, is building it in to our plan, knowing that we are going to be measured on that one thing. Because it's something that's easily quantifiable, too, whereas a lot of other things aren't. And I can say, "You know, last year we had 369,000 hits to the Web site." And they go, "Ooh."

#### Allows Laser Targeting of Publics

The results of these focus groups also confirmed that practitioners are taking advantage of the Web as a communication tool to better manage issues. While not always two-way communication, the Web empowers practitioners with a new medium through which to communicate with their publics. Many of the participants say they use the Web to pass along carefully packaged information to opinion leaders online in an easily digested form.

Because anyone with a computer and an Internet connection can publish information on the World Wide Web,



practitioners laud the ability of the Web to circumvent traditional media gatekeepers, and go directly to narrow and specific targets. Vickie predicts this ability will change public relations in the future:

I think advertisers and maybe PR people are going to go directly to their audiences. I'm not sure how exactly. But yeah, if your company wants to get information out, maybe in-person press conferences will be a thing of the past. That'll be done over the Internet. Paper press releases are quickly becoming a thing of the past already.

Similarly, practitioners state that the Web has provided them with an excellent media outlet for their organizations and clients. Participants say the Web connects diverse subjects with diverse publics. The Web has provided Susan with more targeted audiences for her clients:

Because of the Web, I have so many more specialized online sites and newsletters that I can target, that I can use to pitch for my clients and get to more specialized audiences.

Angela also sees new opportunities for placement:

There are actual organizations that post white papers.

The engineers use it as resources. So our internal product technical marketing people write the white papers, then as a PR practitioner I get them placed on the Web site. And we get a lot of hits off that which turn into leads for the company.

Tom sees the Web as more important than print placement:

I think especially in the last few years it's given us tremendous public relations opportunities that didn't exist prior. I'm finding more, nowadays, that I am looking for placements on Web sites much more than I am looking for placements in newspapers. There are Web sites that are starving for content. They more readily publish something than a newspaper will, and especially can focus on more target type audiences that appeal to certain segments of the audience, as opposed to a general publications or even magazines, for example. I also find that there's permanence -- once the content is there, it's there for a long time and it's there for a wider audience.

However, some practitioners still expressed some frustration with their management not counting Web placements as prestigious as print placement. Angela says she is frustrated that her Web placements do not hold the same prestige as print placements:

I would sent a clip out to the company internally and I would say, "This is where this clip appeared online. They would say, "Is it in print? Is it hard copied? Did it make it in the hard copy version?" And I would think, gosh, don't they understand the value of this because people can forward this, and there are more eyes definitely that see it online than in print. But I think the prestige of it being on paper still means a lot to people.

#### Better Issues Management Through Communication

Interactive communities allow practitioners to log on, find their publics, and communicate directly with them. Karen often uses the Web to make sure her company is being correctly discussed online:

Other groups I will post information specifically, a lot because they know that I am on the list, and then

they'll ask a question about something and say, "Well, what about this?" And I will respond. And so it is a good tool to also be able to immediately respond to them when there's questions and to quell rumors very quickly. You know, when something pops up and I can get right on and say, "No, no, no, here's what it is." "Oh, okay." You know, and it's really good.

With the exception of research, issues management is one of the main public relations tasks for which practitioners say they are using the Web for empowerment. Practitioners say the Web makes almost any information available worldwide the instant it is posted to a Web site, giving practitioners unprecedented access to news from an unlimited number of sources.

While some practitioners do express concern over the credibility of information found online, they more often praise the Web for its informational capabilities. For example, Karen not only identifies issues for management, but also manages those issues:

In terms of the career path, yeah, I think as they say, "Information is power." And the more information you have access to and you can provide that meaningful, and

I think it's not just having the access to the information, it's being able to interpret it, and a lot of it goes along with the strategy and being a counselor to senior management, which is what PR always strives to be. That it really gets you in there. Because it's not enough to just go say, "Oh, here, I found those pressure leaks," on the Internet. No, you know, it's, "Hey, did you hear these two companies are merging? And this is the amount of money they are saying it's worth? And did you know that there's a shortage of this product over here?" And being able to help the company formulate strategy based on the information that you are gathering. It has to be relevant information.

In addition, Karen can literally watch the communication activities of their active publics, enabling them to anticipate issues:

We've had issues with protesters. And being able to track that. I mean, a lot of times I'll know. I'll know before they show up to protest on an issue. I'll say, "They're going to be out in front of our manufacturing plant on Friday at 8 a.m., and this is

what they are protesting about." It's amazing the stuff that you can find out and really know.

Numerous practitioners also stated that they use the Web as a way to improve their efficiency by keeping up with television news while still working at their desks. Tom no longer keeps a television on in his office to keep abreast of current events while he is working. "That's a fascinating aspect of the Web. You don't need a television set anymore. You can sit in front of your monitor and watch." Dawn used the Web in a similar way to keep up with the issues affecting her not-for-profit work:

And we did that with the Governor's "State of the State" address. We were all at our desks working. We reduced the screen so we could watch and listen to the Governor's address while we were working. And I remember thinking, "Okay, this is not real."

Of course, the Web also presents issues management challenges. Rumors travel quickly on the Web. Newspaper reading often takes place online now rather than in paper form. The lightning-fast news cycle certainly presents its share of challenges to Karen:

News travels so much more quickly now than it ever did, and a small story in our center in Kaline, Texas, will be on the "Kaline Daily Herald" and then all of a sudden it's on the Web sites everywhere. And you know, people find out much more quickly about things, rumors travel as you were mentioning, you know, much more quickly than they did in the past. And so you have to be right on it.

The always-on capability of the World Wide Web changes the way that practitioners use the Internet. Practitioners can use the Web as a customized and constant connection to breaking news that affects their clients and organization. Susan uses custom pages to have sites that are applicable to her and her clients automatically update her as issues arise,

I'm online constantly. Even keeping up with the news. My home page is set at CNN.com, and everybody in the office can get the constant updates -- just keeping up with different things. There are so many newsletters and Web things you subscribe to that give you so much more information than if you had to go look for it yourself. They deliver it right to your desktop.

### An Important Crisis Communication Tool

When issues become crises, practitioners say they also turn to the Web. The Web allows Dennis, a corporate practitioner, to take his message straight to a concerned public:

If you are in a crisis situation and all of a sudden you need your CEO from your company, and he goes up and speaks and you can broadcast that over the Internet, I mean, that's great usage. You don't waste any time to watch, and it's 4:31, and you have to be out by 5. If you're battling East Coast deadlines, you know, put it on right away.

Karen uses the Web in crisis situations to go straight to her publics:

And no intermediary too. I didn't even think of that. From a crisis standpoint I mean, right now, if you have a crisis, it's immediately evolving and, like you said, you want to put your CEO up, you've got to call the news stations and get them to put them on, and they may or may not put them live, and if they don't, then they are going to edit out segments. And you can put them



right up there from your office. If you have a video camera, just go live.

### Improves Relationships with Clients/Management

Practitioners see the Web as a tool that has improved their relationships with clients by making them experts--smarter and more knowledgeable, and consequently more valuable to their clients. Maria, an agency practitioner, said the Web has improved her client relationships by allowing her quick and easy access to information:

I think the Web has improved my reputation with my client, because I just don't say "Hey, look, you got coverage in here." I show them the news clip in which they get mentioned. I'll give them a recommendation that is based on primary research through online newsgroups, for example, a DejaNews.com discussion group talking about that company's product. I'll tell the client, "Hey did you know that your product is being talked about in this way," or "Prepare to answer such questions dated yesterday, that came up in this way, when so-and-so said" whatever. And they'll go, "Oh my gosh, how did you know that?" So I think that's how it's improved my reputation as a PR practitioner

with my clients. It improves client relationships dramatically.

Similarly, Vickie said the Web has empowered her by making her able to respond to clients quickly and efficiently:

It's made me extremely responsive to my clients. I had a client call me on Tuesday who said, "Can you verify this?" And I said, "No, but give me two minutes." Boom, boom, boom. Check out a couple of Web sites. I actually checked out *her* Web site. I found the answer, but I looked like a genius because I called her back within two minutes with the answer. I emailed her all of the specifics. She forwarded that off to the producer of the show, done. The whole issue is done.

According to Vickie, by using the Web to improve these relationships, practitioners can move up in their organizations:

But I jumped right on it, and had I not been really savvy with search engines and this and that, and digging around sites until you find what you need, I probably wouldn't have been able to answer the

question. And that probably happens at least a couple of times a week, if not more, where clients just depend on me to know things that they probably just as easily access. So I guess going back to your, "Can this make you ascend in your job?" Possibly. If the client raves about how brilliant you are, and your supervisor picks up on it, sure.

Practitioners point to the Web as having made public relations more important to their clients, thereby improving public relations' prestige. Kay, a sole practitioner, stated that her clients seem to appreciate the practice more. "I think there's definitely more of an understanding of Public Relations in terms of the value and wanting to be careful about how clients craft a message or what they say or do."

#### Generates Revenue for Agencies and Saves Money for Corporations

As a revenue-producing and cost-saving tool, the Web has caught the attention of public relations practitioners. Many agencies now depend on developing Web presences and content for the Web as a source of revenue. Therefore, Dawn

says agency practitioners are now required to know about the Web in order to compete:

I think it's the price of admission. You need to know what's going on or you're not going to move up. I think every single client has a Web site that we've either created or we run or we manage or we write content for.

Corporations have also embraced the Web as a way to reduce the steep costs associated with printing and distributing brochures and the expense of buying advertising. Betty says the Web allows her department to save substantial amounts of money:

We have found it's less expensive to use the Web. We will do an email campaign and then get people to come to our Web site, and it's been tremendously successful. For seminars we put on, we develop a landing page, and we jazz it up, just like you would do to an ad that you would ordinarily print in a publication. It costs to get it designed, but then there is no cost to put it in a publication. And we find that people these days are much more apt to get on the Web rather than thumbing through the publication.

In addition, corporations point to the willingness of the press to seek out their own digital press materials rather than having print assets sent to them. Dennis, a corporate practitioner at a movie studio, says the press seems to prefer assets in digital form:

We also use it as a cost-saving tool because rather than having to send out press materials and send out photos to every reporter with the trades, we have built our own internal sites. We just built a site for every movie. So you can download the press notes from this site. You can download photos. You know, our own PR is set. So it makes it that much easier for us. We don't have to pay our agencies to send everything out. The Web lets people come to us.

Other practitioners have parlayed their knowledge of even the most mundane Web tasks into personal consulting profits. Tom says clients often rely on him for basic Web publishing advice, thereby affording him expert power:

I charged them for that, but they could have done it simply on their own. But they didn't realize that. It was a five-minute thing. I had the knowledge, and they

thought it was much more complicated than it actually is. I was able to use my expertise for profit.

Age Differences Disputed by Some, but Clearly Evident; Web Empowers Women

Some practitioners stated that in terms of Web use, they did not feel that an age difference exists between younger practitioners and older practitioners. Karen maintains the differences are between types of people rather than age or gender:

I think to some degree it's an age thing, but I do find even among our senior management, it's really more a philosophy in who you are. If you are the kind of person that tends to seek out new things, and do new things, and I think people in PR tend to be the ones that are interested in the current events and the news and what's happening and what's new. And so I think they were more early adopters of the technology. I don't think it's just an age thing because I have people who are in their 50s and 60s that are all over the Internet and they just love it. Then there are people that are younger that can barely open the attachment in their email or they don't know how to do

anything. I don't think there's as big a difference among women and men in terms of use.

Agency practitioners of all ages are required to know about the Web so that they can sell its capabilities to their clients. Susan sees in her agency the pressure on all ages to know how to see the Web to their clients:

In an agency, we are constantly being forced to think on our clients' behalf and encourage them to use the web. I don't see age so much as being an issue, because it's the account managers who are pushing the clients to improve their Web sites or add on to their press room on the Web sites.

However, many younger practitioners can not separate the practice of public relations from the Web. Betty does not see younger practitioners being able to function without the Web. "I think the younger people coming up don't know how they would live without it. That's all they know."

Confirming this belief, Jill, a recent college graduate who works in agency public relations, has never worked without the Web:

I really can't remember a time when there wasn't Internet, and I know that sounds kind of bad, but I've always used it for everything, from school papers in high school to research I'm doing now.

Although she has been in the business for five years, Angela also cannot conceive of public relations practice without the Web:

I have never written a press release without the Web. The amazing research tools that went into it, in just being able to go to a company Web site and pull their boiler plate, and know who to quote, and have the material polished before it goes for review - the Internet helps tremendously with that.

Even so, young and old practitioners do agree that the Web does empower younger practitioners by making them experts. Mandesa is often called upon to provide information to older practitioners:

I work really closely with our research manager, and he's out of college for two years, and I'm out of college for a year, and everyday we have people emailing us. It's a knowledge issue with them not



knowing where or how to find what they need. And it might take two minutes, because I have done it a hundred times before, so I am familiar with the program. They might have heard about the program, but they have no idea how to use it.

Similarly, the Web has provided Maria with a specialty. "I don't know if it has elevated me. I think it has labeled me. It's more of a specialty, which I like. I like feeling special."

In terms of gender difference, some female practitioners see the Web as an equalizer. Dawn says that using the Web actually helps to dispel discrimination through its inherent anonymity:

It's an equalizer because there's no face any more, so there's no opportunity to discriminate against anybody when you and I can go to the same Web site and get the same exact information. But if we were face to face with a person, they're going to automatically make a differentiation between us. They would see ethnicity, they would see height, weight, gender, all an equalizer now.

### PR Now Controls the Web

Are PR still laggards when it comes to technology? The participants in these focus groups do not seem to think so. Dawn says agencies are now encouraging their clients to use the Web as a communications tool because it allows them to provide more consulting services:

They can't be (laggards) because I mean, we would fail miserably. I think in our industry we had to jump on it. I remember when we launched our Web site for the company that we were before we were acquired. We made a big deal about the first PR firm in Sacramento to be on the World Wide Web. And you know, we felt like we have to be in front of the industry when it comes to things like the Internet and the Web, and pushing our clients. So as PR professionals we HAD to, or we would fail at our jobs.

Corporate practitioners now claim that they control the Web content in their organizations. Management is seeing that the Web as the province of public relations. When asked whether IT or IS still controlled the Web in organizations, the answer was for Karen was resoundingly "no":

Not anymore. No, I took it away from them. I mean, maybe in the early days, that was the thing...And I had to go and say, "Look, all content up there is going to come through me. You guys aren't going to come up with your own." I don't think anyone would dream of having the techies do the content. Yes, you want to have them there on it. But you're competing against all the other companies that have very professional Web sites. And your company and your CEO doesn't want to be the one with the Web site with the stuff misspelled, and the product name nowhere to be found because they didn't think about that.

Even if practitioners are not Web savvy, they are usually charged with developing the content for a corporate Web site. Elaine, a practitioner in charge of public relations for a local university with many years experience, has been charged with managing the content for her organization's site because management realizes the Web is about communication. "I am not an expert in this area, but in two jobs I've been the one it has fallen to to figure out what to do about the Web. It was about communications. It wasn't really about technology."

Betty also has had been charged with the same task numerous times: "Every time I have gone to work for a company because they want to improve their image, the first thing they want is for me to do their Web site over."

Some Practitioners Concerned About "Impersonal" Web, Credibility and Falling Behind

Now that they control the Web presences for their organizations, practitioners mentioned few negatives the Web brings into their professional lives. However, numerous practitioners, young and old, were afraid the Web would lessen or completely remove the personal aspects of their jobs. Elaine has often warned the younger members of her staff about maintaining personal relationships and not hiding behind the impersonal Web:

One of the things that I am always telling my staff is that being on the Web is not a substitute for talking to people. And that it's a good thing to go online and do some research about a company, but you have got to pick up the phone and talk to them. Tell them when the site was updated or something. It's just another piece of information in the exact same way that an annual report is not a substitute for actually calling somebody and talking about it. I've been around for a

longer time, so my strengths are my contacts and my relationships. They haven't been around as long, so they are a little shy, and they hide a little bit behind the Web. So that concerns me. You have to talk to people. You are forced to develop those relationships. So if all you do is stay in your office on the computer, you are not going to develop those relationships.

Dennis, a younger corporate practitioner was also worried about losing the personal connections in public relations because of the reliance on electronic communication:

Now there's so much you can do via the Internet and email and everything, but I hate to see people quit picking up the phone and talk to somebody altogether because there's a personal portion of that you just can't rely on. I mean, I'd much rather have somebody call me if they've got a really good idea or if they're pitching something to me. I'd rather hear something really good on the phone in person than in an email, or "Check this out on the Web site," and have to figure it out myself. I'd rather speak to them in person or on

the phone. So, I don't want people to lose the personal touch.

Elaine sees the Web as an unsuitable substitute for the personal relationships needed for successful public relations:

And you can launch a relationship on email, but you've got to follow it up on the phone or in person. Learn about something or someone on the Web. But you've got to follow it up with some kind of contact. Cause that's the way PR works. It's all about relationships. . . This doesn't denigrate the web in anyway. It's just not a substitute for actually having relationships.

In contrast, Maria sees the Web as bring clients and publics closer to practitioners:

I agree wholeheartedly, but now the technology is so vastly improving that you could combine both . . . And maybe that is a solution to maintaining the warmth in the relationship -- you see the verbal expression.

Some practitioners also worry about information credibility online. Practitioners expressed concerns about

the quality of information available online and the danger the Web poses of providing false information to publics. Andrew expressed how false information can affect the marketing of a movie:

It's kind of a love-hate relationship with the Internet sometimes, because you know, there's just so many sites out there and there's so much going on. And if you have a movie coming out, one little rumor can get out, and it goes on a million sites, and it's impossible to quell that with every site, and every person that's writing about us, or a certain film, or something, or an actor in one of your films, or something like that. For good or bad. Some good comes up, and it's all over the place, and you're like, "Great. This is going well. Look at all these people and all these hits that these sites are getting." But if something comes up and it's false, and the next thing you know, there's millions of people, you know, looking at this information, and you have reporters calling about it. It just makes your work that much tougher, you know, and then you have this crisis on your hands.

Others find the Web and all forms of new technology a source of stress because of how fast the technology changes and develops. While Mary finds the Web an indispensable tool, she also worries about keeping up with the latest developments:

It is somewhat of a source of stress to me, because I also feel a little inadequate, technology. Thank God my husband is an engineer, so I have a live-in IT person. If I didn't I don't know what I would do. So I do have this kind of constant concern that I am not keeping up with technology. I don't know how to do a Web site.

#### Practitioners See the Web as Empowering

Notwithstanding the fears about the loss of the personal aspects of public relations, information credibility or keeping up with the latest developments, the participants in both focus group sessions clearly feel that the Web is empowering them in their practice of public relations--structurally, as experts and even as owners. Karen sees the Web as helping her advance structurally in her organization:



I think [the Web is elevating PR in my organization] dramatically because I am the eyes and ears for them, out there finding out what's going on. "Hey did you know what this patient group is saying about this drug? Did you hear the news that this company bought that company? Or that this drug was denied approval by the FDA this morning? Or that this product has issued a product recall this afternoon?" And you can get that information really quickly, and get it to them, and they look to that, not only as a source of information, but in helping to interpret it. Because I can be there and say, "Look, I know you're planning this marketing campaign and planning to do this, this way. But let me tell you how these patients are going to react. They're going to see it like this, and they're going to respond like that, and this guy, by the name of this in Durham, North Carolina, this is what he's going to do."

Kay says the Web has helped her move into an ownership position:

It's like having the world in my home office. I don't think I could be doing what I'm doing today without it. I don't see how I could have my own business working

out of my home without the World Wide Web...My clients don't know that I'm wearing pajamas. I am in slippers all day long.

Finally, the Web is empowering practitioners by allowing them to support senior management as experts. Karen sees her expert status as empowering the public relations functions:

They like being in the know. They like knowing about things before anybody else. So when I can email them stuff really quickly when it's just happened, and then they hear about it, they really appreciate that.

#### The Future: Wireless

Practitioners were optimistic about the how the Web would factor into the future of public relations. Many expressed eagerness about the future of wireless. Vickie, in particular, is looking forward to the changes a wireless Web will bring:

I think as technology improves and as we are able to carry around little computer screens with us and immediately access the Web constantly wherever I am, just like I can dial my cell phone, if I can

immediately look at CNN or whatever is immediate. Because I was thinking about September 11. I spent the following day, because that day I was off work and I watched CNN all day. But the next day it just constantly, CNN, update, update, update. And that was how I spent my whole entire day. I didn't want to leave my desk because I didn't want to stop knowing what was happening all the time. So if I could have that in my hand, and I could leave the office, and go do all the other things, like I was telling you, I spent all day at a conference today, but I would have loved to access information. It gives you the edge. So technology improved, and that's the capacity that we have. I think it'll really revolutionize the industry in terms of just being completely mobile all the time. Telecommuting. We won't need offices anymore, to be honest with you, because you can fax, email, read the paper, do everything on one little thing.

#### Summary/Discussion

Among the participants of these sessions, agency, corporate, education and not-for-profit practitioners are using the Web extensively for research, evaluation, two-way

communication, issues management and to improve productivity and efficiency. They also feel these uses are empowering them in numerous ways as practitioners.

While the initial aims of this research were confirmed by these focus groups, several things have changed since the previous study on this subject. Initial results indicate that public relations now controls the Internet, and encroachment by IS or IT departments is no longer a major concern for corporate practitioners. The Web is improving client and management relationships for practitioners. The use of the Web to both generate revenue and cut costs has caused clients and management to take notice of the Web. Age and gender technology differences found in the past were disputed by today's practitioners.

### Limitations

Because the pool of participants of this study were self selected, the participants tended to be those who are, at the least, extremely interested in the World Wide Web. Consequently, the results of these sessions must be considered preliminary to the quantitative portion of this study. Also, because the sessions were limited to one hour each, some discussion that could have illuminated additional

areas of inquiry was cut short. Nevertheless, numerous commonalities between the sessions were identified, and participation was active.

#### Effect on Quantitative Portion of Survey

In addition to indicating more practitioner Web use than the previous study, numerous recurring themes arose in both sessions of these focus groups. Therefore, the researcher added an additional section to the questionnaire entitled "Role of the Web in Public Relations." This section contained 14 items that were designed to test additional research questions relating to hiring outside consultants, purchasing Web firms, "always-on" Internet access, multi tasking, cost reduction, personal interaction, decreased response times, IT/IS encroachment, disintermediation and crisis management.

The next chapter will outline the quantitative results of this study, a national survey of practitioners.

Chapter VII

Quantitative Results

## Results

According to Yu and Cooper (1983), acceptable response rates for mail surveys conducted in social science journals between 1961 and 1981 were 47%. However, Yu and Cooperman's work was based on studies completed in the 1960s and 1970s. More current research has shown that response rates are rapidly dropping in recent years (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000). In addition, although standard response rates have yet to be published for the new method of email surveys, a number of email studies have been completed. G. Cameron (personal communication, February 1, 2002), chair of the Center for Advanced Social Science Research at the University of Missouri, estimated that among the numerous email studies his center has conducted in recent years, most email survey response rates fell between the 10% and 20% range.

Of the 4,400 questionnaires transmitted in this study, 1,472 respondents (33%) were unreachable due to incorrect email addresses, 7 (0.2%) were no longer in the positions listed with PRSA, 7 (0.2%) were no longer working in public relations, 16 (0.4%) declined to participate because of the time required to fill out the survey or because computer

problems prevented them from accessing the survey, and 22 (0.5%) were out of the office during the survey period. Twenty-six (0.6%) respondents failed to complete enough of the survey to provide usable data. From the 2,850 valid subjects in the final sample, 432 usable responses were received, representing a response rate of 15.2%. All 432 responses were included in the data analyses. Of those completing the survey, 296 (68.5%) requested a copy of the executive summary, reflecting interest in the subject and that respondents took the survey seriously.

#### Responses Mostly Female, Caucasian

Two-hundred-sixty-two (60.6%) respondents were female; 131 (30.3%) were male. Thirty-nine (9%) respondents failed to report gender.

Three-hundred-sixty-four (84.3%) respondents were Caucasian, 12 (2.8%) were Hispanic, 7 (1.6%) were African American, 6 (1.4%) classified themselves as "other," 3 (0.7%) were Asian American, and 1 (0.2%) was Native American. Thirty-nine (9%) respondents failed to report race.



#### Sample Evenly Distributed Among Professional Affiliations

One-hundred-three (23.8%) respondents indicated they had corporate affiliations, 87 (20.1%) indicated they were affiliated with an agency, 85 (19.7%) indicated not-for-profit affiliations, 47 (10.9%) reported education affiliations<sup>1</sup>, 36 (8.3%) were sole practitioners, 26 (6%) indicated government affiliations, and 17 (3.9%) indicated "other." Thirty-one (7.2%) respondents failed to indicate affiliation.

#### Diverse Age, Education, Experience, Income Represented

Ages of respondents ranged from 23 to 71 years with an average age of 39.9 years. Seventeen (N=86, 19.8%) were ages 21-26, 19 (22.1%) were 27-29 years old, 20 (23.3%) were 30-37 years old, 22 (25.6%) were 38-54 years. Breaking age categories down further, 28 (6.5%) practitioners were ages 21 to 25, 60 (13.9%) were ages 26 to 30, 78 (18.1%) were ages 31 to 40, 50 (11.6%) were ages 36 to 40, 49 (11.3%) were ages 41 to 45, 53 (12.3%) were ages 46 to 50, 37 (8.6%) were ages 51 to 55, 16 (3.7%) were ages 56 to 60, 11 (2.5%)

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<sup>1</sup>Practitioners who indicated "education" served in public relations capacities for universities or colleges. One respondent indicated that he was both a college professor and a practitioner.

were ages 61 to 65, and 6 (1.4%) were ages 66 to 71. Forty-four practitioners (10.2%) failed to report age.

Two-hundred-forty-seven (57.2%) practitioners reported having a bachelors degree, 122 (28.2%) had a masters degree, 10 (2.3%) had a doctorate, and 14 (3.2%) reported "other."

Of those reporting "other," 1 (.2%) respondent indicated possessing an art certificate, and 1 (.2%) indicated a certificate in Health Management. Two (0.4%) indicated they had not finished college, and 11 (2.5%) indicated they had completed some graduate work. Thirty-nine (9%) respondents failed to report their education level.

Two-hundred-twenty-five (52%) respondents reported earning undergraduate degrees in journalism or communication. Most of these earned degrees in journalism (N=117, 27.1%), with 56 (13%) having earned degrees in communications/speech, and 52 (12%) in public relations. Two-hundred-twenty (51%) respondents reported completing some form of graduate study. Of these respondents, 77 (17.82%) reported completing graduate studies in mass communication or communication, with 40 (9.26%) in communication, 22 (5.1%) in public relations, and 15 (3.5%) in journalism and mass communication.

Experience ranged from 1 year to 45 years, with an average tenure of 13.5 years' experience. In the entire sample, 17 (3.9%, N=432) had more than 30 years' experience, 21 (4.9%) 26-30 years, 39 (9%) 21-25 years, 54 (12.5%) 16-20 years, 73 (16.9%) 11-15 years, 87 (20.1%) 6-10 years, and 85 (19.7%) less than 5 years. Fifty-six (13%) respondents failed to report amount of experience.

Annual salaries ranged from \$8,000 to \$500,000, with an average salary of \$66,019.81. Of those reporting income, 13 (4.9%) respondents reported earning \$30,000 or less; 76 (28.8%) \$30,001-\$45,000; 75 (28.4%) \$45,001-\$60,000; 40 (15.2%) \$60,001-\$75,000; 36 (13.6%) \$75,001-\$100,000; and 24 (9.1%) \$100,001-\$500,000.

#### Wide Range of Organizations, Professional Levels

Respondents were affiliated with organizations having numbers of employees ranging from 1 to 500,000 ( $\underline{M}$  = 6,451.9,  $\underline{SD}$  = 35,776.6). Most practitioners had one title ( $\underline{M}$  = 1.3,  $\underline{SD}$  = 0.9). While 245 (56.7%) had no professional designations such as APR or ABC, 111 (25.7%) had one designation, and 27 (6.3%) had two.

Most practitioners (80.8%) did not serve on corporate boards ( $\underline{M}$  = 0.2,  $\underline{SD}$  = 0.7), 17 (3.9%) served on one

corporate board, and six (1.4%) served on two corporate boards. However, not-for-profit board membership was slightly higher, with 176 (40.7%) not serving on not-for-profit boards, 94 (21.8%) serving on one board, 75 (17.4%) serving on two boards, and 25 (5.8%) serving on three boards.

Practitioners averaged three organizational functions (such as marketing, finance, legal, etc.) in their careers ( $\underline{M} = 3.1$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.6$ ), and averaged two functions in their current organizations ( $\underline{M} = 2$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.6$ ). In addition, practitioners averaged just above one level of clearance to get communications materials approved ( $\underline{M} = 1.2$ ,  $\underline{SD} = .9$ ).

#### Owners of Firms Well Represented

Eighty (15.7%) respondents indicated they owned or were related to the owners of their organizations. Twenty (4.6%) practitioners indicated that they were the founder or owners of their public relations practice, and 61 (14.1%) practitioners indicated that they were related to the owners or founders of their practice. However, most practitioners do not own substantial shares in their organizations, with 184 (42.6%) owning no shares, and 60 (13.9%) owning less

than 1%. One-hundred-thirty-six (31.5%) respondents failed to report share ownership.

Most Practitioners Use the Web and Email for Public Relations for Several Hours Daily, Connecting at High Speeds

Four-hundred-twenty-six (98.6%) respondents reported using the Web in their practice of public relations, and 369 (85.4%) reported using email in their practice. Three-hundred-eighty-one (88.2%) respondents indicated they use broadband connections to connect to the Internet at work.

Of those using the Web (N=426), 124 (28.7%) report five hours or less use per week, 149 (34.5%) 6-10 hours per week, 96 (22.2%) 11-20 hours per week, 36 (8.3%) 21-30 hours per week, 15 (3.5%) 31-40 hours per week, and 12 (2.8%) more than 40 hours per week.

Of those using email (N=369), 45 (10.4%) report five hours or less use per week, 132 (30.6%) 6-10 hours per week, 117 (27.1%), 11-20 hours per week, 59 (13.7%) 21-30 hours per week, 46 (10.6%) 31-40 hours per week, and 33 (7.6%) more than 40 hours per week.

Some Practitioners Using Wireless, But at Low Levels

Sixty-eight (15.7%) practitioners reported using wireless devices to access the Internet. Of those 68

practitioners using wireless, 56 (82.4%) report five hours or less use per week, 5 (7.4%) 6-10 hours per week, 2 (2.9%) 11-20 hours per week, 1 (1.5%) 31-40 hours per week and 4 (5.9%) more than 40 hours per week.

#### Web Now a Standard Tactic in Public Relations

Asked to answer on a scale of 1 to 5, with "5" being "strongly agree" and "1" being strongly disagree, practitioners agreed that the Web is now a standard tactic in public relations ( $\underline{M} = 4.2$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.0$ ). In addition, practitioners agreed that the "always-on" broadband capabilities of the Web had changed their practice of public relations ( $\underline{M} = 3.8$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.0$ ). Practitioners were also using the Web to keep up with breaking news while working in other applications at their computers ( $\underline{M} = 4.2$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 0.9$ ).

While practitioners were more neutral about the Web reducing personal interaction ( $\underline{M} = 2.9$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.0$ ), respondents agreed that the Web reduces the time they have to react to issues ( $\underline{M} = 3.3$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.0$ ). Respondents also agreed that IT or IS departments do not control the Web in their organizations ( $\underline{M} = 3.3$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.1$ ). Respondents agreed that the Web affords them an opportunity to eliminate intermediaries and go straight to their publics ( $\underline{M} = 3.5$ ,  $\underline{SD}$

= 0.9). Practitioners saw the Web as an important crisis management tool ( $\underline{M} = 3.8$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 0.9$ ). Practitioners agreed that the Web is replacing other forms of research in their organizations ( $\underline{M} = 3.4$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.1$ ). Most practitioners also disagreed that they could not remember practicing public relations without the Web ( $\underline{M} = 2$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.2$ )

Practitioners agreed that the Web is both reducing costs for their organizations ( $\underline{M} = 3.5$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.1$ ) and generating additional revenue ( $\underline{M} = 3.3$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.1$ ). Although fewer practitioners said their firms had purchased smaller companies with Web expertise ( $M = 2.3$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.1$ ), more agreed that they had hired firms with the same expertise ( $\underline{M} = 3.1$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.3$ ).

#### Practitioners Perceive that the Web is Empowering Them as Experts but Not as Owners

Although practitioners tended to disagree that the Web empowered them to move into their current positions ( $\underline{M} = 2.7$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.2$ ) or as owners ( $\underline{M} = 2.3$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.1$ ), they tended to agree that the Web has empowered them as experts ( $\underline{M} = 3.6$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.0$ ), perhaps by enhancing their prestige as practitioners ( $\underline{M} = 3.2$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 1.0$ ).

The following section reports the statistical procedures to construct indices of some of the Likert-type

items to create the three independent variables used in the data analysis to measure Web use, roles and power.

### Constructing the Measures

#### General Web Use Index

Principal components factor analysis of the 17 items measuring Web use (all of the items in Part II) using varimax rotation resulted in loadings on three factors. (Results of the varimax rotation analysis, along with means and standard deviations for each of the Web items, are reported in Table 7.1. Frequencies for these items can be found in Table 7.2.)

An examination of the scree plot also suggested a three-factor solution. The first factor explained 34.3% of the variance, the second factor explained 11% of the variance and the third, 7.2%.

The first factor, labeled "Web productivity and efficiency," consisted of five items that dealt with using the Web in preparation for campaigns and presentations, monitoring news, improving pitches for reporters and identifying issues (Cronbach's  $\alpha=.85$ ). The second factor, "research and evaluation," contained five items that measured the use of the Web for general research and



evaluation, the tracking of press releases, Web subscriptions to news services and to monitor the competition (Cronbach's  $\alpha=.72$ ).

The final factor, "issues communication," contained seven items that measured use of the Web for two-way communication, monitoring and communicating with communities, targeting publics, placing news stories, managing issues and evaluating traffic patterns on company or client Web sites (Cronbach's  $\alpha=.77$ ).

Summated scales were created from each of these three factors to measure Web productivity and efficiency, research and evaluation, and issues communication. However, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the 17 items measuring use combined was .87 and would have decreased if any item was deleted. Therefore, all 17 items were combined into a single "use" index to measure general Web use to analyze those research questions dealing with overall use, instead of using the three sub-scales, in those data analyses. For nominal level data, the Web use index was divided at the midpoint into "high" and "low" level use. The Web use index ranged from 20 to 81 with a midpoint of 46 ( $\bar{M} = 46.5$ ,  $SD = 12.2$ ).

### Roles Classification Index

Principal components factor analysis of the 28 items measuring practitioner roles (items in Part IV) using varimax rotation resulted in loadings on seven factors. (Results of the varimax rotation analysis, along with means and standard deviations for each of the role items, are reported in Table 7.3. Frequencies for these items can be found in Table 7.4.)

Examination of the scree plot suggested a seven-factor solution. The first factor explained 29.5% of the variance, the second factor 7.8%, the third factor 6.7%, the fourth factor 5.7%, the fifth factor 5.5%, the sixth factor 4.6% and the seventh factor 4.1%.

The first factor consisted of eight items that dealt with formal and informal training, making communication policy, solving problems, planning and recommending action, keeping management informed of public reactions, and involving non-public relations people in the public relations process. Cronbach's alpha for an index consisting of these eight items was .86 and would have decreased if any item was deleted. Therefore, these items were combined into a single trait index entitled "counsel."

The second factor included five items that measured how practitioners represent their organizations as advocates to outside publics. Cronbach's alpha for an index consisting of these five items was .84. Therefore, these items were combined into a single use index entitled "advocacy."

The third factor was comprised of three boundary spanning items that measured practitioners' gatekeeping activities. Cronbach's alpha for an index containing these three items was .93 and would have decreased if any item was deleted. Therefore, these items were combined into a single Web use index entitled "gatekeeping."

The fourth factor was made up of two items measuring how frequently practitioners serve as an internal informer, keeping management actively involved in public relations, and a third item measuring the frequency that practitioners write public relations materials. However, because Cronbach's alpha increased to .70 when this item was removed and the item double loaded on the next factor, this item was deleted from this index. The remaining two items were combined into a single use index entitled "catalyst."

The fifth factor contained four items that measured the frequency that practitioners performed technical public relations tasks, such as writing and editing communication

materials, taking photography and designing graphics, and producing pamphlets and brochures. Cronbach's alpha was .69 and would have decreased if any item was deleted. Therefore, all four items were combined into a single use index entitled "technician."

The sixth factor included four items that measured the frequency of formal and information acquisition, as well as public opinion research and communication audits. Cronbach's alpha was .64 and would have decreased if any item were deleted. Therefore, all four items were combined into a single use index entitled "research."

The seventh factor included two items that measured the frequency that practitioners took responsibility for success or failure in their practice. Cronbach's alpha was .78 and would have decreased if any item was deleted. Therefore, both items were combined into a single use index entitled "responsibility."

### Cluster Analysis

Each role factor was converted into a standardized factor score. A cluster analysis was performed to determine the combinations of these factors that occur on a regular basis, formulating the basis for public relations roles.

Previous research (Leichty & Springston, 1996) suggested a five-cluster solution with one group being outliers. Therefore, three, four and five-cluster solutions were each determined. The four-factor solution was the best fit, with the convergence occurring after 15 iterations. Euclidean distances indicated that the four-cluster solution provided the cluster memberships that were different from each other. F ratios were also the largest in the four-cluster solution, indicating that each of the variables in the analysis had a large part in determining the clusters. (Final cluster centers, Euclidean distances between final clusters, and F tests are reported in Table 7.5.)

The first cluster consisted of 120 practitioners who scored highly on counsel, catalyst, technician, research and responsibility, and low on advocacy and gatekeeping. Therefore, in accordance with the Leichty and Springston (1996) typology, this group was labeled "internals."

The second cluster was comprised of 92 practitioners who, similar to previous research, scored highly on counsel, advocacy, gatekeeping, catalyst and responsibility, and conversely very low on technician and research. Similar to Leichty and Springston's (1996) findings, this group seemed to delegate technical activities, and to not conduct

research and evaluation activities. Therefore, this group was labeled "managers."

The third cluster contained 98 practitioners who scored highly on the external activities of advocacy, gatekeeping, and research, and low on counsel, catalyst, technician and responsibility roles. Therefore, in accordance with previous research, this group was labeled "externals." Again, much like in previous research, this group interacted frequently with external publics, but played passive roles in the management of their companies.

The fourth cluster consisted of 91 practitioners that scored very high on technician and above the mean on advocacy and gatekeeping. Conversely, this cluster also scored low on counsel, responsibility, catalyst and research. Therefore, this cluster was labeled "technician."

#### Power Measures

Finkelstein (1996) suggested that his power measures may need to be adjusted to fit the organizational setting. Accordingly, the researcher adjusted the questionnaire item measures in this study to fit the public relations profession. In addition, because it became apparent after initial analyses of frequencies distributions of responses

to individual questionnaire items that none of the respondents attended what Finkelstein termed "elite" educational institutions, the researcher replaced that component of the prestige power with the level of education achieved. Cronbach's alpha for the 14 power measures was .68 and would have decreased were any item removed. Therefore, the 14 power measures were standardized and combined into a "power" index.

For procedures using nominal level data, the non-standardized power index was divided at the midpoint into "high" and "low" level use. Because of the high number of missing values in the power section, the means were used to replace missing values. The power index ranged from -12.8 to 28.8 ( $\underline{M} = 29.3$ ,  $\underline{SD} = 10.3$ ).

### Assumptions

The researcher used analysis of variance as the primary statistical method to test for significant effects of World Wide Web use and roles on power. In analysis of variance, there are what Kennedy and Bush (1985) refer to as the "trinity of assumptions" (p. 111). These are that: (1) the individual treatment populations, from which members of each treatment group are randomly drawn, are normally

distributed; (2) the variances of the different treatment populations are homogeneous or homoscedastic; and, (3) the error components are independent within treatment groups as well as between groups so that each observation is unrelated to any other observation in the study.

In this study, visual examination of tests for kurtosis and skewness for each variable revealed no threats to the assumption of normality. Examinations of three homogeneity-of-variance tests: Cochran's C, Bartlett-Box F, and Hartley's F max did not reveal violations to the assumptions of normality or homoscedasticity. This permitted the data analyses, regardless of the slightly unequal treatment cell sizes, to proceed with confidence.

Tests of statistical significance were conducted at the traditional probability level of .05, though some results approaching significance are reported when they appear to shed light on relationships.

#### Tests of Hypotheses

**H1: Greater levels of World Wide Web use by PR practitioners for research and evaluation lead to greater levels of power for practitioners.**



Results of a one-way analysis of variance found no significant difference in power between those practitioners that were high users of the Web for research and evaluation and those that were low users.

**H2: Greater levels of World Wide Web use by PR practitioners for issues management lead to greater levels of power for practitioners.**

Results of a one-way analysis of variance approached significance in the difference in power between those practitioners that were high users of the Web for issues management and those that were low users, with high users of Web issues management exhibiting higher levels of power ( $\bar{M} = .6$ ) than low users of the Web for issues management ( $\bar{M} = .6$ ,  $F(1, 430) = 3.4$ ,  $p = .065$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.6).

**H3: Greater levels of World Wide Web use by PR practitioners for productivity and efficiency lead to greater levels of power for practitioners.**

A one-way analysis of variance showed that greater levels of World Wide Web use by PR practitioners for productivity and efficiency leads to significantly greater

levels of power ( $\underline{M} = 1.1$ ) for practitioners who are high users than for low users ( $\underline{M} = -1.0$ ,  $\underline{F}(1, 430) = 12.7$ ,  $\underline{p} = .0001$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.7).

**H4: Greater levels of World Wide Web use among traditional managers leads to greater levels of decision-making power.**

A one-way analysis of variance comparing the means of high and low-level Web-using traditional managers found no significant differences in power levels.

**RQ1: How do practitioners who play different roles use the World Wide Web?**

A one-way analysis of variance found significant differences in the ways public relations practitioners use the Web. Tukey followup procedures found that *traditional managers* use the Web in general significantly more ( $\underline{M} = 3.0$ ) than *externals* ( $\underline{M} = 2.7$ ) and *technicians* ( $\underline{M} = 2.6$ ,  $\underline{F}(3, 397) = 4.9$ ,  $\underline{p} = .02$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.8).

In addition, a one-way analysis of variance with Tukey follow-up procedures found that *managers* also engage in significantly more Web activities to improve productivity

and efficiency ( $\underline{M} = 15.6$ ) than *technicians* ( $\underline{M} = 13.3$ ,  $\underline{F}(3, 397) = 4.3$ ,  $\underline{p} = .005$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.9).

A one-way analysis of variance with Tukey followup procedures found that *internals* conduct significantly more research and evaluation activities on the Web ( $\underline{M} = 15.4$ ) than do *technicians* ( $\underline{M} = 13.7$ ), and *managers* conduct significantly more research and evaluation ( $\underline{M} = 16.2$ ) than *externals* ( $\underline{M} = 14.1$ ,  $\underline{F}(3, 397) = 5.8$ ,  $\underline{p} = .001$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.10).

A one-way analysis of variance with Tukey followup procedures found that *managers* conduct significantly more Web issues management ( $\underline{M} = 18.6$ ) than *internals* ( $\underline{M} = 16.3$ ,  $\underline{F}(3, 397) = 3.0$ ,  $\underline{p} = .03$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.11).

**RQ2: How does PR practitioners' World Wide Web use relate to gender, age, professional tenure, race, education and income?**

A one-way analysis of variance test found no significant difference between genders in their use of the Web.

However, a one-way analysis of variance with Tukey followup procedures found that those practitioners aged 21-25 used the Web significantly more ( $\underline{M} = 3.1$ ) than all other practitioners ( $\underline{M} = 2.7$ ,  $\underline{F}(1, 430) = 5.8$ ,  $\underline{p} = .02$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.12). In addition, a Pearson correlation test found that hours of Web use was significantly ( $\underline{p} < .001$ ) and negatively ( $\underline{r} = -.24$ ) related to age.

A one-way analysis of variance found no significant difference between different levels of tenure or education and Web use.

A one-way analysis of variance with Tukey followup procedures found that Caucasians ( $\underline{M} = 2.7$ ), Asian-Americans ( $\underline{M} = 2.9$ ), Hispanics ( $\underline{M} = 2.7$ ), and Native Americans ( $\underline{M} = 4.5$ ) use the Web significantly more than African-American practitioners use the Web ( $\underline{M} = 2.1$ ,  $\underline{F}(5, 387) = 4.3$ ,  $\underline{p} = .001$ ).<sup>2</sup> (The F-table is reported in Table 7.13).

A one-way analysis of variance with Tukey followup procedures found that those practitioner reporting income in excess of \$85,000 used the Web significantly more ( $\underline{M} = 3.0$ ) than practitioners reporting all other levels of income ( $\underline{M} =$

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted this test violates assumptions of analysis of variance regarding minimum numbers of subjects in cells.

2.7,  $F(1, 262) = 10$ ,  $p = .002$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.14). In addition, a Pearson correlation test found that Web use was significantly ( $p = .0001$ ) and positively ( $r = .27$ ) related to income.

**RQ3: Does practitioners' wireless access to the Web affect how practitioners conduct issues management?**

A one-way analysis of variance indicated that practitioners with wireless access to the Web use the Web significantly more ( $M = 20.0$ ) for issues management than those practitioners who do not have wireless access ( $M = 16.4$ ,  $F(1, 430) = 23.3$ ,  $p = .0001$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.15).

**RQ4: How does broadband access change practitioners' use of the World Wide Web?**

A one-way analysis of variance revealed that practitioners with broadband access to the Web use the Web significantly more ( $M = 2.8$ ) than those practitioners who have dial-up access ( $M = 2.5$ ,  $F(1, 430) = 5.9$ ,  $p = .016$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.16).

In addition, a one-way analysis of variance found that practitioners with broadband access use the Web

significantly more for research and evaluation ( $\underline{M} = 15.1$ ) than those practitioners who have dial-up access ( $\underline{M} = 13.6$ ,  $\underline{F}(1, 430) = 5.2$ ,  $\underline{p} = .023$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.17).

Finally, a one-way analysis of variance found that practitioners with broadband access use the Web significantly more for issues management ( $\underline{M} = 17.2$ ) than those practitioners who have dial-up access ( $\underline{M} = 15.1$ ,  $\underline{F}(1, 430) = 6.7$ ,  $\underline{p} = .01$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.18).

**RQ5: Do agency practitioners use the Web differently than corporate practitioners?**

A one-way analysis of variance revealed that practitioners affiliated with agencies ( $\underline{M} = 2.9$ ) use the Web significantly more than those practitioners affiliated with corporations ( $\underline{M} = 2.7$ ,  $\underline{F}(2, 398) = 5.3$ ,  $\underline{p} = .005$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.19).

**RQ6: Do practitioners' levels of Web use affect amount of time they spend analyzing issues?**

A one-way analysis of variance indicated that PR practitioners who are higher-level users of the Web agree significantly more that the Web reduces reaction time for practitioners ( $\bar{M} = 3.5$ ) than low-level users ( $\bar{M} = 3.2$ ,  $F(1, 430) = 11.1$ ,  $p = .001$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.20).

**RQ7: How do levels of practitioners' Web use relate to email use?**

A one-way analysis of variance indicated that PR practitioners who are high-level users of the Web use email significantly more ( $\bar{M} = 4.3$ ) than low users ( $\bar{M} = 3.9$ ,  $F(1, 430) = 10$ ,  $p = .002$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.21).

**RQ8: How does practitioners' Web use for revenue generation relate to overall Web use?**

A one-way analysis of variance indicated that PR practitioners who are high users of the Web are significantly more likely ( $\bar{M} = 3.5$ ) than low users ( $\bar{M} = 3.0$ ,  $F(1, 430) = 25.5$ ,  $p = .0001$ ) to use the Web for revenue generation in public relations. (The F-table is reported in Table 7.22).

**RQ9: How does practitioners' Web use relate to use of other types of research among practitioners?**

A one-way analysis of variance revealed that PR practitioners who are high-level users of the Web are significantly more likely to have replaced other types of research with Web-based research methods ( $\bar{M} = 3.6$ ) than low users ( $\bar{M} = 3.2$ ,  $F(1, 430) = 11.9$ ,  $p = .001$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.23).

**RQ10: How are levels of practitioners' Web use related to levels of encroachment by IT or IS departments in online communications?**

A one-way analysis of variance found no significant differences between high- and low-level users of the Web and their beliefs about IT/IS encroachment.

Post Hoc Analyses

Revisiting the Power Question

Given the mixed results on the hypotheses tests for the effects of different levels of Web use on practitioners' levels of power and the research question finding that agency practitioners use the Web more than do corporate practitioners, it seems useful to probe the relationships



between Web use, professional affiliations and power further.

A one-way analysis of variance found the agency practitioners have significantly more power ( $\bar{M} = 3.1$ ) than corporate practitioners ( $\bar{M} = -1.3$ ,  $F(2, 398) = 21.6$ ,  $p = .0001$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.24). However, a two-way analysis of variance testing whether affiliation and category of Web use affected power found no significant differences. While there was a significant main effect for affiliation, there was no significant affiliation by Web use interaction.

Breaking the categories down further, a one-way analysis of variance with Tukey follow-up procedures found that sole practitioners have significantly more power ( $\bar{M} = 7.7$ ) than agency ( $\bar{M} = 1.2$ ), corporate ( $\bar{M} = -1.0$ ), not-for-profit ( $\bar{M} = -2.2$ ), government ( $\bar{M} = -2.0$ ) or education ( $\bar{M} = 0.25$ ,  $F(6, 394) = 14.1$ ,  $p = .0001$ ). In addition, agency ( $\bar{M} = 1.2$ ) holds significantly more power than not-for-profit ( $\bar{M} = -2.2$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.25).

In addition, post hoc examination of the perceived power measures supports that practitioners believe the Web is empowering them. A one-way analysis of variance revealed that those practitioners who are high users of the Web for

research and evaluation are significantly more likely to perceive higher levels of power ( $\underline{M} = 11.2$ ) than low-level users ( $\underline{M} = 9.8$ ,  $\underline{F}(1, 394) = 24.1$ ,  $\underline{p} = .0001$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.26). A one-way analysis of variance also showed that those practitioners who are high users of the Web for issues management are significantly more likely to perceive higher levels of power ( $\underline{M} = 11.1$ ) than low-level users ( $\underline{M} = 9.9$ ,  $\underline{F}(1, 394) = 13.6$ ,  $\underline{p} = .0001$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.27). Finally, a one-way analysis of variance showed that those practitioners who are high users of the Web to improve productivity and efficiency are significantly more likely to perceive higher levels of power ( $\underline{M} = 11.2$ ) than low-level users ( $\underline{M} = 9.7$ ,  $\underline{F}(1, 394) = 24.7$ ,  $\underline{p} = .0001$ ). (The F-table is reported in Table 7.28).

Table 7.1

Factor Analysis of Web Use

Factors:	<u>M</u>	SD	<u>Factor Loadings</u>		
			1	2	3
Prepare for Public Relations Campaigns	3.1	1.2	.92		
Monitor the News	3.1	1.2	.92		
Prepare Client or Prospect Presentations	2.6	1.3	.70		
Improve a Pitch by Researching Individual Reporters	2.7	1.3	.56		
Identify Issues	3.0	1.1	.50		
Track Press Release Usage	2.7	1.4		.73	
Research	2.8	1.2		.65	
Evaluation	2.6	1.2		.65	
Monitor the Competition	3.8	1.1		.56	
Subscriptions to Customizable News Alerts	3.0	1.5		.50	
Two-way Communication	3.0	1.4			.75
Target Publics	2.8	1.4			.74
Communicate in Online Communities	1.7	1.0			.69
Monitor Online Communities	2.1	1.1			.54
Manage Issues	2.4	1.1			.50
Place News Stories	2.6	1.3			.47
Use Web Site Traffic to Show Results	2.5	1.3			.43
Eigenvalues			5.8	1.9	1.2
Percent of Variance Explained			34.3	11.1	7.2

Items: Subjects were asked "How often do you use the Web to/for ..."

Table 7.2

Frequencies for World Wide Web Use

Items:	At no time	Less than once a month	A few times a month	A few times a week	All the time
Use the Web to/for:					
Prepare for Public Relations Campaigns	29	104	158	59	82
Monitor the News	30	104	158	59	81
Prepare Client or Prospect Presentations	104	120	121	33	54
Improve a Pitch by Researching Individual Reporters	86	124	123	33	66
Identify Issues	36	108	161	68	59
Track Press Release Usage	108	85	123	53	63
Research	61	123	144	59	45
Evaluation	90	132	110	58	42
Monitor the Competition	12	44	107	112	157
Subscriptions to Customizable News Alerts	108	64	74	78	108
Two-way Communication	81	101	102	42	106
Target Publics	86	130	98	38	80
Communicate in Online Communities	253	114	39	11	15
Monitor Online Communities	159	139	77	37	20
Manage Issues	102	143	117	43	27
Place News Stories	101	117	130	21	63
Use Web Site Traffic to Show Results	114	149	87	26	56

Table 7.3

<u>Factor Analysis of Practitioner Roles</u>			Factor Loadings		
Factors:	<u>M</u>	SD	1	2	3
Train Managers	2.7	1.2	.71		
Train informally	3.0	1.1	.70		
Train formally	2.6	1.1	.68		
Make Communications Policy	3.2	1.4	.64		
Act as a Problem Solver	3.6	1.1	.62		
Plan and Recommend Action	3.8	1.0	.60		
Keep Management Informed of Public Reactions	3.8	1.1	.49		
Act as a Catalyst for Non-PR Involvement	3.5	1.2	.48		
Provide Information Informally to Outsiders to Improve Image	3.1	1.3		.84	
Provide Information Informally to Outsiders to Encourage Favorable Action	3.3	1.2		.82	
Provide Information Formally to Outsiders to Improve Image	3.2	1.1		.67	
Provide Information Formally to Outsiders to Encourage Favorable Action	3.3	1.2		.65	
Represent Organization at Meetings	3.0	1.1		.52	
Decide What Portions of Information from Outside to Distribute Inside Your Organization	3.6	1.3			.86
Decide to Whom to Distribute Information from Outside to Inside Your Organization	3.7	1.2			.83
Decide When to Distribute Information from Outside to Inside Your Organization	3.6	1.2			.81
Eigenvalues			8.2	2.2	1.9
Percent of Variance Explained			29.5	7.7	6.7

Items: Subjects were asked "How often do you ..."

Table 7.3 (Continued)

<u>Factor Analysis of Practitioner Roles</u>				Factor Loadings			
Factors:	<u>M</u>	SD	4	5	6		
Keep Others in the Organization Informed	3.5	1.1	.61				
Keep Management Actively Involved in Public Relations	3.9	1.1	.60				
Write Public Relations Materials	4.1	1.0	.59	.58			
Produce Photography and Graphics	3.2	1.4		.75			
Produce Pamphlets and Brochures	2.5	1.2		.74			
Edit/Rewrite Public Relations Materials	4.0	1.1		.71			
Formally Acquire Information from External Sources	2.4	.99			.83		
Informally Acquire Information from External Sources	3.1	1.1			.66		
Research Public Opinion	1.9	.82			.61		
Conduct Communication Audits	1.9	.75			.50		
Take Responsibility for Failure	3.1	1.3				.86	
Take Responsibility for Success	3.1	1.2				.85	
Eigenvalues			1.6	1.6	1.3	1.1	
Percent of Variance Explained			5.7	5.5	4.6	4.1	

Items: Subjects were asked "How often do you ..."

Table 7.4

Frequencies for Role Measures

Items:	At no time	Less than once a month	A few times a month	A few times a week	All the time
How often do you?					
Train Managers	57	148	110	34	55
Train informally	26	107	157	53	61
Train formally	54	178	105	30	37
Make Communications Policy	50	90	97	56	111
Act as a Problem Solver	9	73	119	87	116
Plan and Recommend Action	2	44	130	94	134
Keep Management Informed of Public Relations	8	51	112	81	152
Act as a Catalyst for Non- PR Involvement	16	84	128	70	116
Provide Information Informally to Outsiders to Improve Image	45	93	124	67	85
Provide Information Informally to Outsiders to Encourage Favorable Action	37	74	130	80	93
Provide Information Formally to Outsiders to Improve Image	26	79	166	62	81
Provide Information Formally to Outsiders to Encourage Favorable Action	25	82	156	65	86
Represent Organization at Meetings	21	119	165	46	63
Decide What Portions of Information from Outside to Distribute Inside Your Organization	25	58	109	77	135
Decide to Whom to Distribute Information from Outside to Inside Your Organization	23	49	100	82	150
Decide When to Distribute Information from Outside to Inside Your Organization	25	47	124	80	128

Table 7.5

Cluster Analysis of Role Factors  
Final Cluster Centers

	Internals	Managers	Externals	Technicians
Counsel	.05	.35	-.27	-.11
Advocacy	-.34	.36	.53	.10
Gatekeeper	-.92	.53	.00	.44
Catalyst	.31	.75	.20	-.32
Technician	.06	-.47	-.77	1.3
Research	.26	-.48	.29	-.18
Responsi- bility	.21	.48	-.49	-.20

ANOVA Table Representing F Ratios

	Cluster		Error			
	Mean	df	Mean	df	F	Sig
	Square		Square			
Counsel	6.5	3	.95	397	6.8	.00
Advocacy	8.8	3	.93	397	9.4	.00
Gatekeeper	50.6	3	.63	397	80.6	.00
Catalyst	43.6	3	.65	397	67.4	.00
Technician	79.5	3	.41	397	195.7	.00
Research	13.7	3	.90	397	15.1	.00
Responsibility	17.9	3	.88	397	20.4	.00

Frequencies of Cluster Membership

Internals	120
Managers	92
Externals	98
Technicians	91



Table 7.6

Analysis of Variance of Power by Web Use for Issues Management

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	131.1	1	131.1	3.4	.065
Within Groups	16427.4	430	38.2		
Total	16558.5	431			

Table 7.7

Analysis of Variance of Power by Web Use for Productivity and Efficiency

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	474.5	1	474.6	12.7	.0001
Within Groups	16083.9	430	37.4		
Total	16558.4	431			

Table 7.8

Analysis of Variance of General Web Use by Practitioner Role

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	7.2	3	2.4	4.9	.002
Within Groups	195.3	397	0.5		
Total	202.6	400			

Table 7.9

Analysis of Variance of Web Use for Productivity and Efficiency by Practitioner Role

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	281.6	3	93.9	4.3	.005
Within Groups	8702.4	397	21.9		
Total	8984	400			

Table 7.10

Analysis of Variance of Web Use for Research and Evaluation by Practitioner Role

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	323.7	3	107.9	5.8	.001
Within Groups	7399.1	397	18.6		
Total	7722.8	400			

Table 7.11

Analysis of Variance of Web Use for Issues Management by Practitioner Role

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	284.5	3	94.8	3.0	.029
Within Groups	12399.2	397	31.2		
Total	12683.7	400			

Table 7.12

Analysis of Variance of General Web Use by Age

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	3.0	1	3.0	5.8	.016
Within Groups	219.5	430	0.5		
Total	222.5	431			

Table 7.13

Analysis of Variance of General Web Use by Race

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	10.3	5	2.1	4.3	.001
Within Groups	185.2	387	0.48		
Total	195.5	392			

Table 7.14

Analysis of Variance of General Web Use by Income

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	4.7	1	4.7	10	.002
Within Groups	123.9	262	0.47		
Total	128.6	263			

Table 7.15

Analysis of Variance of Web Use for Issues Management by Wireless Access

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	705	1	705	23.3	.0001
Within Groups	13027.9	430	30.3		
Total	13732.9	431			

Table 7.16

Analysis of Variance of General Web Use by Broadband Access

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	3	1	3	5.9	.016
Within Groups	219.5	430	0.5		
Total	222.5	431			

Table 7.17

Analysis of Variance of Web Use for Research and Evaluation by Broadband Access

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	100.1	1	100.1	5.2	.023
Within Groups	8217.3	430	19.1		
Total	8317.4	431			

Table 7.18

Analysis of Variance of Web Use for Issues Management by Broadband Access

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	211	1	211	6.7	.01
Within Groups	13522	430	31.4		
Total	13733	431			

Table 7.19

Analysis of Variance of General Web Use by Affiliation

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	5.3	2	2.6	5.3	.005
Within Groups	197.3	398	0.5		
Total	202.6	400			

Table 7.20

Analysis of Variance of Response Time by General Web Use

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	10.3	1	10.3	11.1	.001
Within Groups	399	430	0.9		
Total	409.3	431			

Table 7.21

Analysis of Variance of Hours of Email Use by General Web Use

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	19.3	1	19.3	10	.002
Within Groups	830.9	430	1.9		
Total	850.2	431			

Table 7.22

Analysis of Variance of Web Use for Revenue Generation by General Web Use

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	27.2	1	27.2	25.5	.0001
Within Groups	458.2	430	1.1		
Total	485.4	431			

Table 7.23

Analysis of Variance of Research by General Web Use

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	14.8	1	14.8	11.9	.001
Within Groups	534.7	430	1.2		
Total	549.5	431			

Table 7.24

Analysis of Variance of Power by Corporate and Agency Affiliation

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	1609.4	2	804.7	21.6	.0001
Within Groups	14834.1	398	37.2		
Total	16443.5	400			

Table 7.25

Analysis of Variance of Power by Detailed Affiliation

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	2914.9	6	485.8	14.1	.0001
Within Groups	13528.6	394	34.3		
Total	16443.5	400			

Table 7.26

Analysis of Variance of Perceived Power by Web Use for Research and Evaluation

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	212.1	1	212.1	24.1	.0001
Within Groups	3469.2	394	8.8		
Total	3681.3	395			

Table 7.27

Analysis of Variance of Perceived Power by Web Use for Issues Management

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	122.8	1	122.8	13.6	.0001
Within Groups	3558.5	394	9.0		
Total	3681.3	395			

Table 7.28

Analysis of Variance of Perceived Power by Web Use for Productivity and Efficiency

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. of F
Between Groups	217	1	217	24.7	.0001
Within Groups	3464.3	394	8.8		
Total	3681.3	395			



Chapter VIII  
Discussion/Conclusions

This dissertation investigated how practitioners' use of the World Wide Web affects practitioner roles and ultimately, power. This study also examined practitioners' attitudes toward the Web and its effects on the practice of public relations.

Four hypotheses and ten research questions were presented in detail in Chapter IV to predict the effects of the use of the World Wide Web on the different types of roles and on power items measuring expert, structural, prestige and ownership power. These hypotheses and research questions were first tested in two focus group discussions, with the results of the focus group discussions presented in Chapter VI. Then, the hypotheses and research questions were further tested through analyses of data collected in a random, national survey of public relations practitioners, and these quantitative results were presented in detail in Chapter VII.

The key findings are summarized below along with discussions of the study's limitations, conclusions and directions for future research.

### Summary of Hypotheses Test Results

#### Higher Levels of Web Use Lead to Greater Power

This study hypothesized that higher levels of use of the World Wide Web for research and evaluation, issues management, and productivity and efficiency would lead to greater levels of power for public relations practitioners.

As expected, practitioners who are using the Web at high levels to improve productivity and efficiency, and for issues management are achieving higher levels of power in their organizations. However, there are no differences in power between those practitioners who are using the Web for research and evaluation and those who are low level users.

#### Roles in Public Relations Linked to Web Use

In addition it was predicted that higher levels of use among traditional public relations *managers* would lead to greater levels of power among practitioners. This study replicated Leichty and Springston's (1996) research and identified four primary role groupings in public relations practice: *internals*, *managers*, *externals*, and *technicians*.

There are no differences in decision-making power for traditional public relations *managers* who use the Web at high levels and *managers* who are low-level users of the Web.

However, *managers* tend to use the Web significantly more than *internals* or *technicians*. *Managers* also use the Web to improve productivity and efficiency more than *technicians*.

*Internals* conduct more Web research and evaluation than *technicians*. *Managers* also conduct more Web research and evaluation than *externals*. *Managers* also conduct significantly more issues management communication on the Web than *internals*.

#### Sex Makes No Difference in Web Use; Younger, Higher Income Professionals Use the Web More

Gender differences no longer exist for the use of the Web. However, age is negatively correlated with Web use; younger practitioners tend to be heavier Web users. In addition, income is positively related to Web use, with high income professionals using the Web significantly more than practitioners at other levels of income. Furthermore, while the numbers of African Americans participating in this study was too low to make generalizations, it appears African-Americans may use the Web significantly less than other ethnicities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>It should be noted that the small Ns for some ethnicities included in this study clearly violated analysis of variance assumptions regarding cell size.

### Wireless/Broadband Access Enhance Issues Management

Those practitioners who are using wireless devices to access the Internet are significantly more likely to practice higher levels of Web issues management. In addition, broadband access to the Internet enables practitioners to conduct significantly more research and evaluation, and issues management.

### Agency Professionals Use the Web More for Issues Management

Agency practitioners tend to use the Web significantly more than corporate practitioners. Those practitioners who are higher-level users of the Web agree that the Web decreases the reaction time practitioners have to manage issues. High-level Web users also tend to use email more often than lower-level Web users. Also, high-level users of the Web are also significantly more likely to use the Web to generate income than lower-level users. Finally, high-level users are more likely to replace other methods of research with Web-based methods than are lower-level users.

### Summary of Post Hoc Analyses

#### Web Use Enhances Power of Sole and Agency Practitioners

Is the Web empowering practitioners? Participants in this study certainly believe so. Those who are using the Web at high levels to improve productivity and efficiency, issues management, and research and evaluation were all found to have significantly higher levels of perceived power than their lower-user colleagues.

Further examining the question of power, sole practitioners had significantly higher levels of power than all other affiliations. In addition, agency practitioners had greater levels of power than corporate and not-for-profit practitioners.

### Strengths and Limitations

#### Reliability and Validity

Reliability is achieved when the measures used in a study consistently give the same answers (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000). The researcher determined reliability by computing a coefficient of internal consistency. The computed Cronbach's alphas demonstrated internal consistency on all three factor indices with alphas ranging from moderate at .68 to respectable at .85.

Validity is achieved when a measuring device measures what it is supposed to measure (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). Content validity was achieved by submitting the survey to the scrutiny of experts. Two focus group sessions were conducted with public relations professionals to test the validity of the instrument. Prior to distribution, the final survey was reviewed by members of the dissertation committee as well as several professional participants in the focus group sessions. The committee consisted of five educators with many years of combined professional experience in public relations, new media and strategic management. Construct validity was achieved by employing items in this study that were used successfully in previous studies (Finkelstein, 1996; Johnson, 1997; L.A. Grunig, 1992; Leichty & Springston, 1996; Porter et al., 2001; Springston, 2001; Thomsen, 1995; Wright, 2001).

External validity is the degree to which findings can be generalized beyond conditions in a study. Securing the sample for this study was a monumental challenge. Lists of public relations professionals are not readily available for purchase or loan. After approaching numerous email list brokers and both of the major professional public relations associations based in the United States, the researcher was

forced to resort to hand typing a print directory. The sample was randomly selected from the national directory of the Public Relations Society of America, the largest public relations organization in the world. However, approximately one-third of the emails listed in this directory contained incorrect or defunct email addresses. In addition, to boost the response rate, the national sample was supplemented by adding randomly selected members from the Georgia Chapter of PRSA. The sample was representative of the public relations profession as a whole, as it contained practitioners representing all major professional affiliations, ages, genders, experience, and ethnicities, and closely paralleled the demographic breakdown of the PRSA membership.

Surveys are always subject to questions about generalizability because while respondents are randomly selected, their responses are subject to human error. Practitioners may not be able to recall information about themselves or their Web activities. Respondents may provide "prestigious" answers rather than admitting they are low level users of the Web or some respondents may have knowingly deceived the researcher (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). Nevertheless, the findings of this survey are triangulated with the results of the two focus group sessions.



Because this study was conducted via voluntary focus group participation, email and a Web-based survey, the results may be influenced by a lack of participation by those that are not online at all or are not online regularly. Response may be a function of use and interest in the subject of the Internet, which could prejudice the results.

However, the only major difference between the qualitative and quantitative results in this study concerned age differences in practitioner Web use. The qualitative results indicated that age did not play a factor in the levels of Web use by practitioners, a finding that was disputed by the quantitative results. Because the subjects of these sessions self-selected their participation, high level users dominated the sessions, skewing the qualitative results somewhat. Even so, recent studies have pointed to the ubiquitous use of email and the Web by public relations practitioners (Porter et al., 2001; Wright, 2002). These results and the triangulation of the qualitative results lend credence to the overall findings of this study.

Containing more than 100 items, this survey was extremely lengthy, leading to some dropout of participants. However, the order of the survey was changed in the second

wave in a split-half approach, so as to capture as much data as possible from partial completions. In addition, several respondents were not able to complete the survey because of computer difficulties, some related to inferior technology and others related to inability to navigate the survey. However, random error was reduced because the instrument electronically prompted respondents to complete the survey if they missed items. The response rate of 15.2% was within the range accepted for surveys delivered by email, and the margin of error was 3.6%. In addition, no significant differences in Web use, roles or power were found between respondents of the different waves and orders of the surveys.

Questions arise in any research relying on self-report measures because correlations are attempted between more than one measure collected from the same respondents. The problem of common method variance involves the consistency motif, where respondents may attempt to maintain some sense of consistency in their answers or are influenced by the social desirability of their answers (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). However, the results of a Harman's one-factor test showed 22 discrete factors when the interval-level raw items

under consideration in this study were subjected to an unrotated factor analysis.

Finkelstein's power items have not been previously used in a public relations context. Consequently, several items became inapplicable. For instance, no respondent had attended one of the educational institutions listed under Finkelstein's operationalization of "elite education." Due to time and expense limitations, the researcher was unable to rate either the status and challenges of each practitioner's individual environment nor apply Standard and Poor's rankings of the corporate boards on which practitioners indicated they served. Furthermore, neither CEOs nor others were surveyed to provide an objective rating of each practitioner's individual level of decision-making power.

### Conclusions

New Web Typology Established: Important Implications for Public Relations Practice

Johnson (1997), Thomsen (1995), and most recently Springston (2001) have all called for additional descriptive research on how practitioners are using new technology. This study provides a blueprint by which practitioners can use the Web to gain power within their organizations. The

results indicate that as the younger generation of high-use practitioners move up in their organizations, the Web will play an increasingly prominent role in the strategic practice of public relations. Nevertheless, this study takes an important first step in establishing the ways in which practitioners are presently using the World Wide Web effectively. The quantitative and qualitative results of this study both suggest that practitioners are using the World Wide Web for issues management, research and evaluation, and to improve productivity and efficiency.

However, findings remain mixed regarding the effects of this use. While practitioners were found to have significantly increased their levels of power by using the Web for improved issues management, productivity and efficiency, no relationships were found between research and evaluation and greater levels of power. This finding challenges the a priori assumption that research and evaluation enhances power. Despite the ease of using the Web for this purpose, perhaps practitioners are still not conducting significant amounts of research and evaluation. Further study may clarify how top management's appreciation-or lack thereof-for the value of research and

evaluation affected public relations practice in these areas.

### Research and Evaluation

While research and evaluation was not linked with power in this study, practitioners do see the Web as an important tool for this purpose. Practitioners are using the Web to track individual press releases and to receive automated news alerts from Web sites to which they have subscribed. In addition, practitioners see the Web as a substitute for other types of research, thereby empowering practitioners to conduct research at a higher level and eliminating trips to the library and the need to hire outside research firms. As a senior level agency focus group participant put it, "To be able to type anything in and find it, is amazing to me. I probably use it everyday for something."

### Productivity and Efficiency

This study indicates that many practitioners use the Web less as a strategic part of the public relations process and more as a personal tool to aid them in their day-to-day activities, such as finding routine information and reading the news online. To improve productivity and efficiency,

practitioners are using the Web to, as one focus group participant put it, "fill in the blanks." They effectively prepare for campaigns and presentations as well as to monitor up-to-the-minute news on an ongoing basis, often while they are conducting other tasks at their desks. Practitioners are also using the Web to identify issues for their organizations.

#### Issues Management

Even while lamenting that the Web reduces the time they have to respond to issues, practitioners are now using the Web for issues management. A focus group participant says the Web provides her a seat at the management table, "I think it's not just having the access to the information, it's being able to interpret it, and a lot of it goes along with the strategy and being a counselor to senior management, which is what PR always strives to be."

By laser targeting publics, the Web allows practitioners to reach diverse publics. Practitioners can either go straight to their publics, bypassing traditional media by monitoring and targeting communities that spring up overnight online around important issues, or they can place news stories on appropriate niche sites visited by the

publics they want to influence. Finally, by evaluating traffic on their own sites as well as on other larger sites, practitioners can monitor the hot-button issues for their organizations and their publics.

#### Roles Typology Confirmed

With minor differences, Leichty and Springston's (1996) contention that the manager/technician dichotomy leaves out important information is not only confirmed but extended by the results of this study; this finding has important implications for public relations theory development. Previous roles research (Leichty & Springston, 1996; Porter et al., 2001; Thomsen, 1995) had focused on corporate practitioners, whereas this study tested Leichty and Springston's assumptions among corporate, agency, sole, not-for-profit, education, and government practitioners. Three of the roles were similar in *internals*, *externals* and *managers*. However, the *technician* role replaced the *generalist* role from the Leichty and Springston typology. This modification of their findings may be due to the inclusion of additional affiliations in the sample.

### Important Implications for Women, Minorities, and Older Practitioners

In an extremely short period of time, women have caught up with their male colleagues in their use of the Web. While previous research showed that female practitioners used new technology significantly less than men (Porter et al., 2001), women are now using the Web in equal numbers and at equal levels as men. This finding is good news given the large majority of women in the public relations profession. As one focus group participant put it, "I don't think there's as big a difference among women and men in terms of use . . . it's really more a philosophy in who you are."

Nevertheless, African Americans as well as lower income and older practitioners appear to use the Web at lower levels than other ethnicities and age groups. Because few respondents were African American, however, further study is needed to examine the full extent of the "digital divide" in public relations.

### Practitioners No Longer Laggards

While many practitioners may not be using the Web for formal strategic issues management communication or extensive research and evaluation, most practitioners surveyed in this study agree that the World Wide Web is now



a standard part of public relations practice. Practitioners now agree that they have finally wrested control of the Web from their IT/IS colleagues or as one focus group participant put it, "I don't think anyone would dream of having the techies do the content. Yes, you want to have them there on it. But you're competing against all the other companies that have very professional Web sites."

Focus group participants indicated that using the Web is now necessary in public relations in order to practice effectively. The "always on" capabilities of broadband Web access are changing the way practitioners do their jobs. Public relations firms have literally purchased expertise by buying smaller firms that specialize in Web communication. Consequently, practitioners are now using the Web extensively and often to reduce costs as well as to generate revenue for their organizations.

Furthermore, a higher percentage of practitioners are now using wireless devices than the general population, indicating, amazingly enough, that some public relations practitioners are now on the cutting edge of technology. In fact, most practitioners agree that the Web has empowered them as experts. Focus group participants see this use of technology as integral to their future success as

practitioners, "I think it's the price of admission. You need to know what's going on or you're not going to move up."

### Implications for Future Research

Public relations researchers should continue to explore the specific ways practitioners enact power in their organizations. Perhaps by moving away from a normative focus and instead establishing accurate indicators of power, researchers can pave the way for practitioners to successfully become members of top management teams in today's organizations. Only then can practitioners implement the cooperative goals of the normative models of public relations. While Finkelstein's power measures provide a good foundation for this type of study, these measures need to be further refined for use in public relations research. The top public relations practitioner in an organization can perform purely technical functions on a daily basis or could be the right hand of the CEO and have a lesser title, having more power than the title represents. Possibly by examining the different types of organizations and attempting to measure the types of business

environments, public relations practitioners can better operationalize power.

In addition to power, the Web is a crucial area of focus for public relations practitioners. In less than ten years, the World Wide Web has achieved critical mass. With more than 450 million users worldwide and the majority of the American public now online, the Web is now an established mass medium. The good news is that researchers have the unprecedented opportunity to study a communications medium from its inception onward toward universal acceptance. As such, the Web should be the object of increased and extensive study by mass communication and public relations researchers.

This study not only establishes a new area of inquiry for public relations researchers, but also demonstrates the value and efficacy of a new methodology for conducting that research. Email and Web surveys offer a quick, inexpensive and efficient way to gather large amounts of data, eliminating the errors resulting from time consuming data entry. Experimental opportunities also abound, in that the Web offers a floating laboratory in which researchers can track the behavior of their subjects in real time or by observing cumulative server log information over the long

term. To extend this study of how the Web affects practitioner power, researchers could keep surveys online for longer periods of time, periodically surveying different samples to monitor emerging trends of behavior in public relations activities, and measuring the resulting increase or decrease in decision-making power. To supplement measures of power used in surveying practitioners, researchers could also survey non-public relations personnel—including CEOs—about how they perceive the decision-making power of their organizations' public relations functions and personnel.

While this study offers a good starting point for research investigating practitioners' use of the World Wide Web, of further interest and value will be future studies that deal with the implications of consumer use of the World Wide Web for public relations practice. Experimental designs could track the behavior of consumers as they were subjected to a variety of conditions and real public relations situations. With the cooperation of practicing public relations professionals, practitioners could study not only the power the Web holds for practitioners but how the Web affects consumers.

Even before the invention of the printing press, groundbreaking communication technologies have always affected the balance of power between individuals and institutions in society, and the World Wide Web is no different. As communication professionals, public relations practitioners will be charged with preparing organizations to meet these changes. By tapping the Web both as a source of power for public relations practitioners and as a rich source of data, public relations researchers can be both actors in and interlocutors of the revolution.

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## Appendix I: Focus Group Recruiting Email

### Subject: Grad Student Needs Your Help

At the next PRSA chapter meeting, you can learn firsthand how the Web is empowering public relations practitioners. I am working with PRSA in conducting research on whether the Internet is empowering public relations practitioners to better participate in the management of their organizations.

Through my research, I hope to measure the impact the Internet has on organizational power for public relations practitioners. My earlier study on the same subject was published this past spring in *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*.

In that study, based on surveys conducted in 1998, I found that despite the potential of the Internet to improve our management abilities through better communication and research, most practitioners were not yet taking full advantage of this important new tool. I am conducting a nationwide survey to see how things have progressed since 1998.

Prior to my survey, I will be conducting focus groups to make sure I am asking the right questions. These sessions will take place in conjunction with the next Los Angeles chapter meeting of PRSA **Thursday evening, January 17th at the Omni Los Angeles Hotel at California Plaza**. The first session will be in the hour prior to (5-6pm) the PRSA meeting. The second session will be the hour immediately following (8:30-9:30pm).

You may choose to participate in the session that is most convenient for you. I will provide light refreshments and \$50 compensation to each participant for their time. Most importantly, I will share the results of my research with those who participate.

Interested? Please call Barbara Gluck @ 310 395 5092 or reply to this email at [newmediaresearcher@yahoo.com](mailto:newmediaresearcher@yahoo.com). Thank you for letting Barbara know if you are interested in participating in Session I or Session II.

Please call soon as the sessions should fill up fast. I very much look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,  
Lance Porter

#### About the Researcher:

Lance Porter serves as director of Internet strategy for Buena Vista Pictures Marketing at the Walt Disney Company. In this position, he directs the Internet marketing strategy for all films released under Touchstone and Disney Pictures. This study is part of his dissertation in pursuit of his PhD in public relations at the University of Georgia. Prior to working for Disney, Porter worked in both public relations and advertising in the banking, biotechnology and insurance industries.

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write:

Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia,  
606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411  
Telephone (706) 542 6514; Email Address [IRB@uga.edu](mailto:IRB@uga.edu)

## Appendix II

### Moderators Guide

#### I. Introduction

##### A. Welcome

Thank you all for coming tonight. I'm Lance Porter, and I'll be your moderator. I am going to tell you a little about what we're doing tonight, and then I'll ask each of you to introduce yourselves. I am a doctoral student at the University of Georgia. In February I will be conducting a national survey of PRSA members for my dissertation research. Tonight, what I learn from you will help me make sure I am asking the right questions. (Have everyone introduce themselves at this time.)

##### B. Statement of the purpose of the interview

Tonight, we are going to be talking about how the rise of the World Wide Web use in public relations has affected practitioner roles and decision-making power within organizations. From you, I hope to gain some general background information as well as confirm/pre-test some research questions I will use in the national survey. The bottom line, however, is that I want to stimulate new ideas and concepts through this process. You all are the experts. I want to hear and learn from each of you.

##### C. Guidelines to follow during the interview

We are not here just to develop my survey. We are here to develop new ideas, and build on each other's ideas and to fill in the gaps in each others' knowledge about this subject. Hopefully, by the time this process is done, it will have been a mutually beneficial exchange.

As the consent form specified, your participation is voluntary. You may drop out at any time. Everything we say in here is completely confidential. Any questions on this part?

#### II. Warm-Up

##### A. Set the tone

I want to make sure you are comfortable speaking out on this

subject. I have been working in new technologies long enough to know that in our profession, we need to know more about new technologies. I am hoping we can pool our collective knowledge and come up with some interesting insights today.

B. Set participants at ease

Please feel free to speak out at any time, both to me and to each other. I will be leading the discussion, but it's important that we hear from all of you.. Some of my questions may pertain to corporate more than agency and vice versa. However, I want to stress that anyone can comment at any time. Like I said before, you all are really the experts. I want to use your knowledge and experience to shape my research so that the results mean something to the profession.

III. Clarification of Terms

A. Establish the knowledge base of key terms through questions

B. Provide definitions of key terms

Tonight we are going to talk about the World Wide Web and its effects on the roles you play in your respective organizations. Since your role affects the decision-making power you hold in your organization, we'll also be discussing the Web's effect on power. So as we talk, I would like for you to keep those three subjects in your head: the Web, public relations roles, and power in your organization. To clarify what I mean by those terms:

**World Wide Web** Sometimes the Internet is used as a catch-all phrase for all things pertaining to the online experience. Today, I would like to focus on that portion of the Internet known as the World Wide Web. Are all of you connected to the World Wide Web? From work? From home? I'm assuming everyone is clear on what the Web is and the difference between the Web and the broader Internet? Is there any one here who is NOT "on line?"

**Roles**

Roles are the what types of positions you occupy within your organization. In the past, those roles have been described

as either managerial,--or a manager--or technical,-- a technician. Managers are those practitioners who guide the direction of their respective organizations. Technicians do the grunt work. Lots of research has been done to show how the different types of roles practitioners serve affect salary, decision-making power and ultimately job satisfaction. More recent research has found that those roles don't break down that easily. We may enact many different roles within our organizations and the organizations that we serve as agencies. Is everyone clear on what I mean by the term "roles?"

### **Power**

Power is often defined as the ability to make others do your will. Tonight we are going to be talking about decision-making power in our organizations.

#### **IV. Establish Easy and Non-threatening Questions**

A. The initial questions are fairly general.

1) Regarding World Wide Web Use

How do you use the Web in public relations today?

How often do you use the Web? Daily? Hourly?

How has this use affected your practice of public relations?

How does the Web affect your productivity?

How does this use affect your efficiency?

Have you seen the use of the Internet change over the last few years? How?

Has your usage changed at all since the events of 9/11?

What are some examples of the best uses of the Web for public relations?

How do you use the Web to communicate with your publics?

How has this changed the way you used to do it before the Web was there?

When you are putting together a campaign, how do you typically use the Web?

How do you use the Web for research?

How else do you use the Web to get information?

Similarly, how do you use the Web to evaluate the success or failure of campaigns?

How has the Web changed the way you manage issues? In other words, how has the Web affected the way you respond to your environment?

Let's talk about challenges and constraints:

What are some of the challenges that the Web poses for practitioners?

What do you dislike about the Web?

Do you feel a certain amount of information overload?

Do you feel that the profession as a whole are laggards when it comes to technology?

How does age affect your use of the Web? In other words, do you see younger practitioners relying more on the Web for info than older practitioners? What about male versus female?

How many of you corporate practitioners program the content for your organizations? Why do you think that you do/don't? Should the public relations function within organizations control the corporate Web presence? Why/why not?

Is the Web underused by public relations? Why? Lack of training? Multimedia and interactive features? What should be done to remedy this situation?

How much control do you have over content?

How much does your technical Web expertise determine the control/input you have into design, content, etc.

How often do you update pages?

## 2) Roles

Can someone describe a typical career path for a public relations practitioner (e.g., corporate vs. agency.) What are some of the different roles that practitioners enact?

How does the Web change this career development? Or how has the Web changed the roles you enact?

How do different types of practitioners use the Web?

Has the Web changed the way you interact with your publics (external and internal)

Now for some more in-depth questions:

How has the Web made you a better manager?

How does the Web make you a better advocate for your publics?

How has the Web enabled you to communicate internally?

How has the Web changed the way you interact with the press?

Do any of you have an online press room or special Web pages for the media? How did you decide what to put in there?

How has the Web made it easier for you to train others in your organization on "good" PR?

How has the Web made it easier for you to produce materials (pamphlets, brochures, etc.)?

How has the Web enabled you to keep up with public opinion? Do any of you monitor message boards, chat rooms, etc?

Challenges and Constraints:

Has the Web diminished practitioner roles? If it has, how?

Does your role as the manager of your organization's Web site make you more of a manager or occupy a more technician type role in your organization?

3) Power

Do any of you feel like the Web makes you more powerful?

How is the Web empowering practitioners today?

How has the Web changed the power dynamic between you and the press?

How does the Web make your publics more powerful?

Structural: Have any of you occupied a different position in your organization due to your use or management of the Web? How?

Expert: Are any of you considered an "expert" because of your use of the Web? Can you elaborate?

Ownership: Are any of you owners or part owners of your organizations? Has the Web contributed to the fact you own your business in any way?



Prestige: Has your use of the Web contributed to your occupational prestige/professional power in any way? In other words, have you been asked to join any corporate boards because of your use of the Web?

Again, we are going to move into some more detailed questioning here:

Do you think younger practitioners gain any power from knowing more about the Internet?

How has the Web reduced your power as practitioners?

Does the Web pose any dangers to public relations or its practitioners? If yes, what?

How does use of the Web affect gender roles and power within your organizations?

#### V. Wrap-Up

A. Identify and organize the major themes from the participants' responses

I think we have established here that the main ways that the Web is empowering practitioners are the following:|

B. Ensure that any conversational points not completed are mentioned: Did I miss anything?

#### VI. Member Check

A. Go around the room to determine/confirm how each member perceives selected issues

#### VII. Closing Statement

A. Request confidentiality of information

B. Answer any remaining questions

C. Express thanks

Appendix III:

FOCUS GROUP  
**SESSION I**

DATE: January 17, 2002

**SUBJECT:** EXPLORING HOW THE Internet EMPOWERS PUBLIC  
RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS

**FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS:**

BETTY / Corporate High-Tech Company  
ANGELA / Corporate High-Tech Company  
ELAINE / Educational Organization  
SUSAN / Large PR Agency  
MANDESA / Small PR Agency  
MARIA / Large PR Agency  
TOM / PR Representative for Professional Association

**LANCE:** Thanks. I appreciate all you guys coming tonight early. I'm Lance Porter. I will be your moderator tonight. I'm a doctoral student at the University of Georgia. I also work for the Walt Disney Co. That's how I wound up in California with an unfinished dissertation. This is part of a national study on how public relations uses the Internet. I'm hoping you guys can help me make sure I am using the right questions when I do this. Please go around and introduce yourselves at this time.

**BETTY:** I'm BETTY and I'm Vice President of Marketing Communications for [a large high-tech company]. We are an Intel Company located in Brentwood which is a little ways from here near the ocean.

**ANGELA:** I'm ANGELA and I work for [the same company], and I'm the Corporate Communications Manager.

**SUSAN:** I'm SUSAN with [a large public relations agency]. I'm an Account Coordinator.

**MARIA:** MARIA Gonzales with [a different large public relations agency], for almost three years now. I can't believe it.

**MANDESA:** I'm MANDESA Ward, an Account Manager at [a smaller hospitality life style firm].

**LANCE:** Tonight we are going to be talking about the World Wide Web, specifically its use in public relations and how it has affected the roles practitioners play in their respective organizations. So it may affect some of you differently. Some of you guys are corporate, some are agency. So I'm hoping to get some background information for my national survey. You guys are the experts. So I am hoping to hear from you. I've been out of PR for a while. I worked in advertising and PR for a number of years in banking, insurance and biotechnology industries. I have a masters in Public Relations from the University of Georgia. My Ph.D is in mass communication with an emphasis in PR and Internet strategies. So I got a job at Disney doing Internet Strategy for Disney film business. I work with PR folks, but kind of out of the game. So I'm not here to just develop my survey, but hoping you guys can gain some things from this as well, and learn about what some other folks are doing. So I'm hoping this will be a mutually beneficial exchange by the time we are done.

You can leave at anytime. Everything we say in here is completely confidential.

Your names will be changed and anything I publish from this your names will not be recognized. I want to be sure you are comfortable speaking out.

I've been working in new tech and public relations for about seven years now and I know enough to know that as professionals we don't know much - and especially with the events of the past year or so - we have no idea of where this thing is going. So anybody tells you that they are an expert in new tech is probably not telling you the truth. Any time you want to speak out, please feel free to speak out and feel free to speak to each other. I'm just the moderator, hoping you guys will lead the discussion.

Like I said, some of my questions will pertain more to corporate, some will be directed to Agency. Also...if you would please say your name before you speak. It will help us transcribe the tapes.

So we are going to talk about the Web and the effects on the roles that you play. I've done some research on the roles that are played and it usually breaks down to you are a manager or a technician in public relations. Managers are the folks that make the decisions and the technicians do the groundwork. Research has shown that that is not so simple.

**ENTER: TOM.**

The three things we are going to talk about is the Web. I want to make sure everybody understands that we are talking about the Web and not really the Internet as an overall entity....that you understand the difference between those two things. Also roles, like manager vs. technician. In some small firms some people do everything and in some firms all they do is produce newsletters. The last research I did showed how the Internet helped people assume more manager type roles because the Internet people relied on them for information and all sorts of things - which may not be the case anymore. Also power. What I mean about power is the structural position you have in your organization.

Or the expertise power you have or even prestige power or some of you who own your own firms may have ownership power. So does everyone understand the power I am talking about. OK. Now we will get started with some general questions.

How do you guys use the Web now?

**BETTY:** In my capacity at [large high-tech company], my department is in charge of the Web, for our division - to the external audience and also we have an internal audience. So we have an internal Web that goes out to Intel so they know who we are as a division. And we have an external one that goes out to all of our potential customers.

**LANCE:** So you're in charge of the Web site presence itself.

**BETTY:** Yes. We have just redesigned our Web site this year, the external one. And that was a huge undertaking. We've gotten a lot of really good feedback on that. So basically that's kind of where we are at with that.

**LANCE:** Have you always been in charge of that? Was PR always in charge of the Web part of your business?

**BETTY:** Well, before I came to [company], nobody had the job I had. I came in and basically developed a department...and they put me, as communications person, in charge of the Web. They had developed a Web when they started up about 11 years ago. And it was the man who was the founder of the company and a couple of technical people threw something together. So that's what I inherited when I came to work here.

We have made it into a very professional high level Web site.

**ANGELA:** Yes, BETTY is in charge of marketing communications and under her there are a number of capabilities, one of them being PR. So my portion, I help the PR portion of the Web site. Whereas BETTY, she has the whole look of the world there and she has promotions and advertising and all kinds of other stuff too.

**LANCE:** You handle more media relations?

**ANGELA:** Yes, media and industry relations...so we do the press releases, the newsletters, the events.

**SUSAN:** I actually can't think of anything we don't use the Web for. Just as far as Internet - like for a world wide company - having the Internet between our different offices helps with our team practices. You can go on and find out what different offices did five years ago if you have an RFP or something that you are responding to or that you need for a client. The Internet is set up with our services--such as Dow Jones, to get clips for our different clients and then basic Internet research. We have acquired different Web companies who are specialized in creating different Internet presences for our clients.

**LANCE:** Like boutiques that you created.

**SUSAN:** Or that can set up. Whereas if I don't have anyone in our office who is able to do something for our client, we can rely on this boutique company we have acquired and they can do anything you could possibly think of. Stuff I would have no idea about.

**LANCE:** Are you constantly online, or do you just kind of check it every once in a while?

**SUSAN:** I'm online constantly. Even keeping up with the news. Like my home page is set at CNN.com, and everybody in the office gets the constant updates -- just keeping up with different things. There are so many newsletters and Web things you subscribe to that give you so much more information than if you had to go look for it yourself. They deliver it right to your desktop.

**MARIA:** My name is MARIA. We use the Web for a project called E-project, for one of my clients, and we just swap files and documents and photos, because they want to see what we look like. And we have our counterparts in Chicago or Atlanta who want to see what our faces look like when we talk on our conference calls. We take our digital pictures and swap files and the Web site called E-project, which is a client's Web site really. Then that's where we swap documents, show our best work, kind of what you were saying too - but this is our relationship with our client and with the PR agency. I don't know if you consider instant messaging as a chat conferencing tool for a branch of it - now we are doing it that way too -- so all of our teams can connect instantly - instead of Email.

**LANCE:** Is this something new through your company? Have you always done it this way - for the three years you have been there?.

**MARIA:** I think we just made the rules up -- and said so to the client team -- there's about 20 of us. We always need something instantly if there's an urgent deadline. A reporter needs something really quickly. We have east coast times and west coast times. Instant messenger is basically a solution to our communication barriers, you could say. Yeah, no, there's no standard way.

**LANCE:** So have you been able to tell how it's changed since you started using the E-project system?

**MARIA:** Yes, definitely, the client has more access to our work. They kinda see what we are doing on a weekly basis - kind of Big Brother like - but it's good. It's a good relationship to maintain with a client -- yeah definitely. We like that.

**LANCE:** We will get into later, how it's changed what your workload is and how it makes things more immediate or whether you feel...

**MARIA:** Yeah, the workload has increased. Faster time equals more work. Yeah, you're supposed to be doing a lot more things in one minute I guess.

**LANCE:** So do you want to introduce yourself before we go any further.

**ELAINE:** Yes, my name is ELAINE. I'm the manager of public affairs for [area college].

**LANCE:** We're just talking about in general right now about how the we use the Web, on a daily basis, in your practice. Why don't you introduce yourself too.

**TOM:** I'm TOM, the public relations manager for the [professional association].

**LANCE:** Are you a CPA?

**TOM:** I'm not a CPA but I play one on t.v.

**MANDESA:** We're a very small company, we're very grass roots. There's only four to the office, so we use the Internet as a opportunity for self promotion more than anything else.

**LANCE:** As self promotion to your potential clients.

**MANDESA:** Yes. In client relations we do a lot for our clients so we work at putting out the newest and the hottest and in keeping their sites interesting and so that way it's a way to build their direct mail programs and things like that to get them more business.

**LANCE:** Do you use it in a similar way that we were talking about earlier - for looking at news or things like that, or is that something that doesn't affect your business.

**MANDESA:** Pretty much it's read the LA Times in the morning.

**TOM:** Let me ask you one question before I start. Are you interested in both how our company uses it and how I use it personally?

**LANCE:** Absolutely. What we are talking about is roles that you play in PR group and the role PR plays.

**TOM:** Well, we have a Web site like every other organization in the world has. It's primarily member focused. We have an aspect of it that is for the public...we have actually in the last few months made it protected for members purposes. We do obviously have a press room and so forth where we post our news releases and some public services such as find a

CPA or ask a CPA questions. Kind of traditional stuff that many Web sites might have. We use it daily in a PR basis. One of the things we normally do - there are three or four of us - in our operations who regularly scan all sorts of Web sites to find out what are the latest news articles or pieces of information that may be applicable to our society and our members and we regularly compile a morning tip sheet with excerpts from various accounting publications, Web sites and newspapers that might be of interest to our people. We compile that as a service and send it out over email.

Personally for myself, I am using it day long. I find it a tremendous research tool. Besides working as PR for CSCPA, I am also an online instructor for the University of Phoenix and I've got access to a huge online library that I not only use for teaching purposes but also for research purposes. I'm on there constantly.

**ELAINE:** I use the Web personally sporadically. Map-quest remains the highest and best use of the Web for me. I think my staff uses it more than me, and maybe that's because they are younger than I am. I still have a tendency to reach for a reference book. I have a staff person who is always looking up words online. She goes to an online dictionary which I don't even understand. But we do a lot of business on the Web - we enroll students and advertise and we are revamping our Web site and we'll have a press room and the ability to have print quality photos with press releases that people can download from the site. I have a staff person who spends about 5% of her time checking Web sites for clips from the LA Times. Otherwise, like you, I read the LA Times in the morning on paper and on Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> I listened to CNN on the computer all day. But that is really the only time, the only day that I had the news on.

**TOM:** One of the reasons I was late is that we are involved in this major bru ha ha around the Enron Andersen situation. And I spent part of the day listening to Yahoo Finance for the SEC'S Chairman Harvey Pitt's News conference which was broadcast live. That's a fascinating aspect of the Web. You don't need a television set anymore. You can sit in front of your monitor and watch...

**ANGELA:** At lunch we had been watching the Today Show -- the exercise getting fit piece -- because we come to work



too early to see it on TV so at lunch we are doing the work out program with the Today Show. It's a nice way to go.

**BETTY:** Can I add one other thing that we also do. On our Web site we have a section for Customer Service. That's where -- it's password protected - and it's quite extensive. Customers can come in and find the solution to some of the problems they might be having with our software, even down to functional specifications for the products that they have bought from us. So that has been very important piece for helping customer service with their customers. And then we have other pieces of the Web site such as the partner or alliance program. Our alliance members can go into that part of our Web site.

So customer service is a really big part of that. Eventually I think we would like to get into some kind of commerce, but we are not there yet. Our products right now don't lend themselves that way.

**LANCE:** Is that something that your group established when you came in? You talked about that you were brought in to establish that department.

**BETTY:** We're the look and feel and content. We manage the content and the needs of each department and make sure that whatever content they need for reaching customers that everything looks the right way and works the right way. But the customer service people themselves are in charge of that piece of the Web site and keeping the information current. Now that it's launched, we have nothing more to do with it. So they have become in charge of that customer service part and they have someone on staff to specifically service nothing else but that part of the Web site. And like I said, it's very involved. But the average person couldn't get into it unless they were given the password.

**LANCE:** How have you guys seen it change over the last few years -- both the Web itself and how you use it on a daily basis. How has it changed the way that you practice public relations?

**MARIA:** My clients definitely have had a better response now. You mentioned radio clips.

My clients just currently said - you know what? If you are going to give it to me on tape my dog is the only one who is

gonna listen to it. So we had to digitize it and from that point on everything is digitize from video to radio -- not just the print. In print, I just don't give the link, I just don't give the copy. Sometimes it's (sound unrecognizable) - so it's protected from anyone editing it. But the clips that are digital now and are accessible via computer, are very essential to the client.

**TOM:** I think especially in the last few years it's given us tremendous public relations opportunities that didn't exist prior. I'm finding more, nowadays, that I am looking for placements on Web sites much more than I am looking for placements in newspapers.

There are Web sites that are starving for content. They more readily publish something than a newspaper will, and especially can focus on more target type audiences that appeal to certain segments of the audience, as opposed to a general publications or even magazines, for example. I also find that there's permanence -- once the content is there, it's there for a long time and it's there for a wider audience. I'll give a specific example. I often try to get placement for members in various publications. We had one member - an article was being written for LA Magazine. A free lance writer called us up for LA Magazine, and we put him in touch with a certain CPA who answered his criteria -- and that article was published in the February issue last year. The CPA contacted me late August and said, "You know, TOM, the article that was published in LA Magazine, went on their Web site and I just got a client from South Africa who read it who is coming to town and he wants to see me as a result of that article on the Web." Great, huh?

**BETTY:** We have found it's less expensive to use the Web. We will do an email campaign and then get people to come to our Web site and it's been tremendously successful. For seminars we put on we develop a landing page and we jazz it up, just like you would do to an ad that you would ordinarily print in a publication. It costs to get it designed, but then there is no cost to put it in a publication. And we find that people these days are much more apt to get on the Web rather than thumbing through the publication. At least that is what we have found with the hi-tech industry.

**LANCE:** So has it helped you to evaluate the success or failure of your campaign based on . . . are you able to show

that to your superiors or as an agency to your clients? Is it easier with the Web to show success or failure of your campaigns?

**BETTY:** Well you can measure the hits too...say like when you have a landing page. You can measure the hits and also what we go by is lead generation. So we have an enrollment form and we are constantly adding to our database. That's the key to what we do is generating leads to our database. And so all of these things are intended to increase the number of leads so you have more people and it qualifies the leads. Yes it's measurable I guess is the answer.

**MANDESA:** I have a question. If you have a hit in print and have the same hit on line. Is that one hit or two press hits.

**TOM:** I think we should count it as two. Because they are two different media and two different audiences.

**ANGELA:** There's different reporters and different editors for online and print too.

**TOM:** Another thing that I want to bring up that we're doing in March is have an online game. We have a major campaign going now to increase the number of CPAs. And we have to start young to get high school students to become accounting majors when they go to college. So we've been starting an active campaign for the last six months or so and one of the things we're starting in March is a game that is appealing to high school students to get them interested in the profession. It's kind of a safari type survival type of adventure game. We are going to have prizes for it too, to draw students to come to that Web site and play the game and on the way learn about what CPAs do.

**BETTY:** Is there a lower number of people showing an interest in becoming CPAs these days?

**TOM:** It's been going down about 20% in the last ten years. People think CPAs do basic accounting and it must a boring profession. But they are FBI agents, forensic CPAs, there are litigators. There is a whole span of things that they do and in fact a lot of the numbers that they used to spend their time over is done by software. They are more management consultants than they are numbers punchers now.

**BETTY:** Are you marketing to these younger students via the Internet?

**TOM:** Our campaign is basically, we have CPAs going out to classrooms and talking about things and we are going to use the Web more as another venue to market to students.

**MARIA:** I think it's two hits.

**TOM:** It may be three or four hits. Because some of those things are picked up by other organizations and posted on their Web site whole or linked too. So I often find articles published here and acknowledged that it was first published on that other site. So forth.. so it just keeps multiplying.

**ELAINE:** I think because so much of what we do is local, the Web left court to us.. When we do national courses, we have online courses, when our market is national or international, it's much more important to us. Because honestly the LA Times is just much more important outlet for us. Nothing beats a piece of paper LA Times article.

**TOM:** We are going to start educating our superiors to see the Web as much more as a media hit than the LA Times.

**ELAINE:** Well do you think it is? I don't know if it is. Do you think it is?

**TOM:** In many respects I think it's what your audience is. But I get the LA Times at the door to my house. I basically don't even read it. I read it at work on the Web. At home the only time I read it is to clip out a story for a clip book and I'll clip out the Web page too. Talk about two hits.

**LANCE:** So by not reading the paper anymore, reading it on the Web, has it changed the way you manage issues for your company?

**MANDESA:** I think it's quicker to get to information because you can get on and do a search and it's a more rapid way of getting to information.

**TOM:** And the search aspect is terrific and I can go onto our association statewide and go through a lot of different newspapers and enter keywords on a search engine in that

newspaper and find out if they ran an article that I am interested in or that pertains to our people. I put out a news release a couple of months ago. Faxed it to ten different publications. No one used it except one of the columnists in Sacramento who I did not fax it to. I faxed it to one of his colleagues, turned up quoting part of it in a column he wrote that was picked up in Memphis, Colorado and Indiana and a couple of other places.

**SUSAN:** The other thing that online newspapers are good for is researching particular reporters. I was calling a reporter the other day and I couldn't remember if he covered that story, or if that was somebody else and I wanted to be able to say something about it so it was easy.

**BETTY:** That's a good point too. Because I know in the past when our CEO was interviewed there has been times that I have used the Web to get background information on the reporter to educate our CEO about who he will be dealing with, what kinds of articles he has written. So that's a really good point.

**TOM:** Is everyone familiar with Prof Net? I use Prof Net. I have gotten lots of good placements out of that. One of the things I do is -- we have to find members who can respond to pieces and we have list-serv members that we put through media training and if I see something appropriate on Prof Net I will send out a message through the list-serv and get responses back from CPAs who are interested in being responsive to that inquiry.

**MARIA:** I go through Prof Net and see headings like the shower curtains. I think man, somebody is pitching shower curtains.

**BETTY:** We have our technology people put our white papers in certain places. ANGELA has done this. How has that worked ANGELA?

**ANGELA:** There are actual organizations that post white papers. The engineers use it as resources. So our internal product technical marketing people write the white papers, then as a PR practitioner I get them placed on the Web site. And we get a lot of hits off that which turn into leads for the company. And a few other thoughts I have had about how the Internet has changed PR. I remember my first job out of school, after I was a reporter, I was a PR

person, and I remember thinking - I was writing my first press release thinking how were press releases written before the Internet? Like I had never written a press release without the Internet. The amazing research tools that went into it...in just being able to go to a company Web site and pull their boiler plate and know who to quote and have the material polished before it goes for review - the Internet helps tremendously with that.

And as far as whether a clip has more merit on line or in print - I don't come across this as much at [company name omitted], but at [company name omitted], where I used to work before, when I would have a clip I would send it out to the company internally and I would say, "This is where this clip appeared online." They would say, "Is it in print. Is it hard copied? Did it make it in the hard copy version?" And I would think, gosh, don't they understand the value of this, because people can forward this, and there are more eyes definitely that see it online than in print. But I think the prestige of it being on paper still means a lot to people.

**BETTY:** The banner, you can send that to your customer and clients in a way that really means something to them where when you download a clip it doesn't look good.

**TOM:** Do you think that attitude will change as the population gets older - that is as the younger population gets older?

**ANGELA:** I think it is already.

**LANCE:** I want to get back to age because that's a big issue in this whole thing whether it gives younger practitioners the leg up on older practitioners that don't want to deal with it. But you had something to say.

**MANDESA:** As to being able to research reporters and what they have written, I'm in the media relations group at my agency, and we are constantly looking for ways to better our pitch and know what the reporter has written in the past - what the last few stories are that they have written, exactly what their beat is so you can bring up "I read the article you wrote on blah blah blah" to boost their ego. They like that. Obviously, we are in the business of getting our clients media hits and being able to focus our pitch to the particular reporters is all because of the Web

and knowing how they write stories, what they like to write about, and even - I use Media Map, which is another Internet, through one of our vendors, every day. It will tell me how the reporter likes to receive the information, when they like getting phone calls, what their pet peeves are about PR people and everything.

**ANGELA:** Before, that was just information you would have on a disc and a CD. It would be updated every quarter or whatever, now it's updated daily - from the Web. I think they have it now live, but password protected. We also have someone in our company who is in charge of monitoring the Media Map updates.

**LANCE:** I want to shift gears a little bit and talk about the challenges and constraints the Web gives you now as practitioners. Do feel that PR as a profession lags behind in technology? Do you think we are technophobic?

**BETTY:** I think the younger people coming don't know how they would live without it. That's all they know.

**LANCE:** But do you see it with people who have been in the business for 20-25 years, do they feel the same way about it? Have they adopted it, or is there a reluctance to do that and leave it to...

**BETTY:** In my experience the people that I've worked with over the span of my career, I guess I could describe from my standpoint, I have always been pretty much in high technology, which I think does affect how we deal with the Web. We've got all the technology people - you can't be in high technology and not use the Web, it's a must.

**LANCE:** On the agency side, how do you see it?

**MANDESA:** Our office is so small, our clients are in constant contact, so we get to the point where we can spin it out for them because we are in such close relation with one another. So I'm wondering if that would be the same with you guys? Do you have that close contact, though you are not an agency?

**MARIA:** I think the Web has improved my reputation with my client. Because I just don't say hey look you got coverage in here, I show them the news clip in which they get mentioned. I'll give them a recommendation, that is based

upon primary research through online newsgroups. For example, like a DejaVue.com discussion group talking about that company's product. I'll tell the client: "Hey, did you know that your product is being talked about in this way, or prepare to answer such questions dated yesterday, that came up in this way when so-and-so said" Whatever. And they'll go, "Oh my gosh, how did you know that?" So I think that's how it's improved my reputation as a PR practitioner, with my clients. It improves client relationships dramatically, and I'm hooked on the Web. I have wireless Web. I download my PDA, audible news, everything.

**ELAINE:** One of the things that I am always telling my staff is that being on the Web is not a substitute for talking to people. And that it's a good thing to go online and do some research about a company, but you have got to pick up the phone and talk to them. Tell them when the site was updated or something. It's just another piece of information in the exact same way that an annual report is not a substitute for actually calling somebody and talking about it. I've been around for a longer time, so my strengths are my contacts and my relationships. They haven't been around as long, so they are a little shy and they hide a little bit behind the Web. So that concerns me. You have to talk to people. You are forced to develop those relationships. So if all you do is stay in your office on the computer, you are not going to develop those relationships.

**LANCE:** Can you give me an example of how that would affect someone's relationship with a reporter? Is it because they are just emailing them and not talking to them about a story.

**ELAINE:** When I was talking about this I wasn't even talking about email. I was making a distinction between email and the Web. One of the things about email and the Web is, it is written, and with the written word you lose the tone and the expression, the warmth, and the relationship. And you can launch a relationship on email, but you've got to follow it up on the phone or in person. Learn about something or someone on the Web. But you've got to follow it up with some kind of contact. Cause that's the way PR works. It's all about relationships. You can know everything in the world about a reporter, but if you can't talk to him or her, what are ya gonna do. Nothing. This doesn't denigrate the Web in anyway. It's just not a substitute for actually having relationships.



**MARIA:** It has a channel where you can have voiceover IP. I'm taking advantage of that now. I recently got a headset with a microphone. I agree wholeheartedly, but now the technology is so vastly improving that you could combine both. While you're online, you can talk with them and write a release together. And talk and get feedback and such. And maybe that is a solution to maintaining the warmth in the relationship -- you see the verbal expression.

**ELAINE:** That does require more expensive technology than I have access to and you have more training and facility than I or my staff have. That is another aspect of it.

**LANCE:** Do you think there is a lack of training in this area for PR folks?

**ELAINE:** I think PR folks learn by the seat of their pants. I don't think they have been trained or anything. I think you just learn.

**TOM:** There are training opportunities out there. There are courses and I myself picked up a lot by the seat of my pants though.

**ELAINE:** I just wait for 25 year olds to show me.

**SUSAN:** Because we acquire these boutique agencies, we have them come in and do like training sessions for us. Even letting us know what they are able to do, so if our client or the manager on the account thinks that something might be interesting to the client or more time efficient, or whatever, we either know how to do it or we know where can learn immediately how to do it. And I have a quick comment going back to what you were asking about age, the Web, and how that affects us. In an agency we are constantly being forced to think on our clients' behalf and encourage them to use the Web. I don't see age so much as being an issue, because it's the account managers who are pushing the clients to improve their Web sites or add on to their press room on the Web sites. I recently saw an article, I don't remember what company it was for, but some big issue came up, and they made this announcement, and then the next day, when the reporters went on the Web to get the information 24 hours later, it wasn't on there. So they went through the Web site and graded it based on a bunch of different things. Being on the agency side, we are responsible for keeping our

clients as far up to date on this technology as we possible can.

**BETTY:** That's a good point she makes about having things up there. One of the things I found is making sure that once we put a news release out, it has to be immediately available on the Web. If it's not on the Web, people will immediately let you know. We are very good about it now, but if there is an issue of the person in charge of putting it on the Web is out, and they haven't provided a back up, all chaos lets loose. That is a challenge. That is something we had to work our way through and have the resources to get it on and have a back up plan if something goes wrong and you can't get it up there.

Right now, because we're a division of [company name omitted], we were acquired by [company name omitted] as a separate company. If you're public and your news release goes out, and you affect the stock price, especially the investment community, where I worked before, they would immediately go to the Web, and would be very vocal if you didn't get things up on time. Whereas, at [company name omitted], we don't have that much of pressure.

**ANGELA:** We don't have the stock price ticker in our press releases. Like the company Sandy and I used to work for, we don't use [stock price symbol] in the press release anymore - so it was more important then but still being a public company, it is our responsibility to get that information up as soon as it is posted on the wire. It has changed the way we do business.

**BETTY:** Making sure someone can either do it from home and make it go alive. That can be a challenge sometimes. Making sure you have someone to get it on the Web and make it go live. One other point I wanted to make, being an older person in the group here, when the Web first started getting popular, I used to try to go to functions like this where they would say -- come and learn how to do the Web, Learn how to make the Web work for you. I was so disappointed in the beginning because there weren't really that many people out there who could tell us how to make it better. And I have found that has drastically improved now. I can go to more places and there are a lot more people trained to tell us how to make our Web better. It took a while for experts like that to emerge.

**LANCE:** Did that just happen in the last couple of years?

**BETTY:** I would say when I was in Washington working for a public technology company, and I had to do a proposal for the Chairman of the Board saying that they couldn't afford not to have a Web site, because they couldn't be competitive. I thought it was amazing that they didn't have one. Then I would go to these courses offered by PRSA and that sort of thing and that was back in 1993-1996. In that span of time, there wasn't one valuable course or forum I went to where they shared anything with me that made me go "wow wow okay." Now I am finding by the end of the '90s - 2000 time frame, that has dramatically gotten better. It has taken time for these experts to emerge and for the technology to make it easier to put your own Web site up. There are so many more tools available and so many more people who have developed that expertise, but that took a while.

**LANCE:** As an expert in that area has that helped you in your role in your company, in your agency? How has that affected you?

**ELAINE:** I am not an expert in this area, but in two jobs I've been the one it has fallen to to figure out what to do about the Web. That is sort of an interesting phenomenon. You just invoke settings. There weren't other experts. Then I sort of was --- the way I thought about it and developed it -- whose our audience, what do they need and what does it look like. So the lesson to me was that it was the purview of experts. It was about communications. It wasn't really about technology.

**LANCE:** As this has become more important to your clients and your company, has that sort of elevated you because you know about this stuff? Or does every body know about this stuff now?

**TOM:** I've been in my current job for about a year. Before that I was on my own for five years and I had a client in aerospace and they would come to me regularly for fairly simple things that they were going to put on their Web site. One of the things I did for them is put together a list of Congress people and their areas. They said, "Can we post this on the Web?" I said yes. They said how? I said save it as an html. They said, "How do I do that?" I said I'll save it as an html for you and email it to you and I got

paid for it. I charged them for that, but they could have done it simply on their own. But they didn't realize that. It was a five-minute thing. I had the knowledge and they thought it was much more complicated than it actually is. I was able to use my expertise for profit.

**LANCE:** Unfortunately we are running out of time if you want to make it to the 6 o'clock meeting. I want to make sure we wrap up and everyone has a final word.

**BETTY:** One point I do want to make that I think is important for PR practitioners that I have found - every time I have gone to work for a company because they want to improve their image, the first thing they want is for me to do their Web over. I find it is very very beneficial to have that stable of experts companies or suites, to find who the Web developer people are, so you don't have to take forever - so when you get a client you can know which Web designer you should use to meet the needs of that customer. Having those ahead of time and knowing who to call on to get those services...because I had to interview ten companies before I could find even two who came close to being able to do what I needed for our new Web site. I still don't think there are that many Web developers out there who are up to the caliber. That is an issue.

**ANGELA:** Just to follow up what BETTY was saying, I think it's important to have the webmaster in marketing. Because we are the communications people, it is another medium for us to get our information out there. If they have a marketing understanding, they understand the importance of getting the press release posted as soon as it is posted on the wire being for a public company versus being an engineer or someone who just uses technology.

**LANCE:** We could do a whole focus group on IT people versus communications people. That's such a huge issue.

**SUSAN:** I work really closely with our research manager and he's out of college for two years and I'm out of college for a year and everyday we have people emailing us and it's definitely a time issue and it's a knowledge issue they not knowing where or how to find what they need. And it might take me two minutes, because I have done it a hundred times before so I am familiar with the program. They might have heard about the program, like can you look on Dow Jones and

find the da da da da da- but they have no idea how to use it.

**MARIA** - I don't know if it's elevated me, I think it's labeled me. It's more of a specialty, which I like, I like feeling special. So at the firm we just share a lot. We have Web site of the day or we hold sessions like lunch learnings of the day, or what are the Web sites useful to a PR practitioner, where can you go for the latest news links, the latest words of the day, like the Miriam Webster online - is that what you were talking about earlier? It's a good place. Specialty is good. It adds more value for your clients and coworkers and you start learning from each other. And once you start using it and they start finding things you haven't found. It's helped me contribute to our developer campaign. You were saying you were getting to know the Webmasters. It's helped me to understand the different audiences of the IT community now that I am dealing through the infrastructure of the Web. That's how it's helped me--specialty.

**SUSAN:** The most valuable thing I found would be expansion. Expanding use. Because of the Web, there are fewer options with print paper, but because of that I have so many more specialized online sites and newsletters that I can target, that I can use to pitch for my clients and get to more specialized audiences.

**LANCE:** So you reach your publics more efficiently.

**SUSAN:** Exactly.

**TOM:** I think the Web is the greatest thing since the invention of the crank telephone, which I was there for...hahaha. I think it offers many more public relations opportunities, many more options for placement, and I think the research aspects are tremendous, as long as you don't accept everything that you see as true. But it certainly helps you monitor what the public thinks of you and vice versa. I'm just anxious to see what else is there that I don't ever know about yet.

**ELAINE:** I really really love MapQuest. (gales of laughter). I use it everyday. I really don't know what I think of the Web. Like you said, the first thing they do when you get a new job is to ask you to redo the Web site because there are a lot of bad Web sites out there because people don't quite

yet know how to use it. And I don't quite yet know how to use it. One of the reasons I wanted to come to this group is to find out how other people are using it so I could learn more.

**LANCE:** Thank you so much for coming.

Appendix III:

**FOCUS GROUP  
SESSION II**

**DATE:** January 17, 2002

**SUBJECT:** EXPLORING HOW THE INTERNET EMPOWERS PUBLIC  
RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS

**FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS:**

**CHARLIE** / Large agency  
**SHANNON** / Large agency  
**MARY** / Sole Practitioner  
**JULIE** / Large agency  
**STEPHANIE** / Large agency  
**ANDREW** / Large film studio (corporation)  
**STEVE** / Large film studio (corporation)  
**LINDA** / Pharmaceutical corporation

**LANCE:**

(First minute or so of session was not recorded). Anyway, I found that practitioners weren't really into it, in that they were sort of a little bit behind and weren't so eager to embrace technology, which has been the case over the years as far as research shows. But part of the reason I want to talk to you guys tonight is to find out if that's still the case, or is it, is the case? Or, which I suspect it's not, just because of what's happened over the past couple of years.

But, I want to talk to you specifically about how you use the Internet each day and specifically the World Wide Web, and that portion of things. To narrow it down.

I'll be talking to you about how it affects your role within your organization and if you're a corporate practitioner, how it affects PR within your organization. And also whether it affects your decision making power at all, by making you an expert or by giving you a different position in your corporation that's higher than it once was, or in numerous other ways.

But, I wanted to help you guys out as well. Obviously you are kind enough to give me your time. So, I'd like for this to be sort of a free exchange of ideas. Feel free to speak up at any time. Obviously your participation is voluntary. You can leave at any time. Everything's confidential that we say in here, and we will change your names and anything that we publish will not be personally identifiable. So, feel free to speak up. And I want to make sure all of you are comfortable speaking out because one thing I've figured out, sort of specializing in this area over the last seven years is that there aren't any experts. It's all new. And so I'm sure everybody in here has something that they can contribute. And that's what I'm hoping to do - is make sure I'm asking the right questions when I do this nationwide survey and make sure it's stuff that's pertinent to PR people. So, you're going to help do that.

**BARBARA:**

Now, if people could say their names before they talk every time. Just for the sake of transcription. It's really helpful to know who is talking, even though we may change your name, but at least we can identify the dialogue from everyone.

**LANCE:**

So, just to reiterate, we're talking about the World Wide Web and its effect on your role that you play within your organization, and whether that's your role as a technician, the person that does sort of the grunt work of PR, or a manager. We found over the years that in our PR research that used to, we thought it was pretty simple - you were either a manager or you were a technician, and that's, you guys probably know that's not really the case. You play a lot of different roles. And so it's a little more complicated. There's a whole lot of different things that PR people do. And so I'm interested in finding out if the Web helps you do what you do. So, and whether it increases your power. So thinking of what the Web roles in power.

So I'm going to start off really generally and just talk to all of you about or you can talk to me about, how you think the Web is helping public relations practitioners.

**BARBARA:**

Should we do everyone identifying themselves first?

**LANCE:**



Oh, I'm sorry. I totally forgot about that. I'm rambling on. If we could go around the room and just say who you are and who you work for and where you come from.

**CHARLIE:**

CHARLIE. [Company name omitted]

**SHANNON:**

SHANNON [company name omitted]

**MARY:**

MARY, and I have my own PR practice.

**JULIE:**

JULIE and I work for [company name omitted].

**STEPHANIE:**

STEPHANIE, and I work for [company name omitted].

**STEVE:**

Steve, [company name omitted].

**ANDREW:**

ANDREW, [company name omitted].

**LINDA WHITE:**

LINDA [company name omitted].

**LANCE:**

So you're the one corporate representative.

**LINDA:**

Yeah. Don't everyone pounce at once.

**LANCE:**

The last survey that I did was only corporate. And so I'm just bringing in an agency this time.

**ANDREW:**

[company name omitted]'s not an agency.

**LANCE:**

That's true. You guys are corporate, as well. Sorry about that. And so, anyway, if anybody would like to jump in, and just talk about how you think the Web is most helping you in your day to day job.

**MARY:**

I'll jump in. It's an amazing tool. If, I mean, the absolute minimum thing that I use it for is to be able to read newspapers on another country in the world. I mean, without the Web I'd be gone to the library or newsstands. I don't know what I would be doing. I mean, it's just revolutionized tracking stories, mine and all other stories.

**LANCE:**

So is that both in and...

**MARY:**

Most of my practice is media relations, so it's just unbelievable. It's such a new world.

**LANCE:**

So is that before and after, or during, or just is it something that you use as a research tool to prepare for a campaign or is it something that you use to evaluate your results or...

**MARY:**

Probably all of the above.

**LANCE:**

All of the above.

**MARY:**

It's, um, for example I can, I can read a newspaper that's published miles away and I work at home, so in my own home at my own computer I can read this newspaper, get to know what reporters are covering, the kind of stories that they're doing so that I know how to tailor a pitch to a reporter. I mean, I can watch someone's work, you know, and call that reporter on the phone.

**BARBARA:**

Could you just identify yourself?

**MARY:**

MARY. Sorry. Can I just go by Kay?

**BARBARA:**

Anything you want.

**CHARLIE:**

Hi. CHARLIE. I use it mostly for research. We do a lot of position papers, documents, taking an issue and kind of putting together statistics, and then we use it to reach out to legislators or other stake holders for different social marketing campaigns we do. So anything from census data to population figures. You know we'll type in key words and find the sites with documents or research on the topics that we do campaigns on. That's what I use it for mostly.

**LANCE:**

Has your use increased over the years?

**CHARLIE:**

Oh my God. When I started in PR we didn't have the Internet, so I went to the library, literally, and I remember pulling out books and going through stuff and the racks of newspapers and magazines and I mean, I, it's how you did your research. And to be able to type anything in and find it, is amazing to me. I love. I mean, I probably do it everyday for something. Definitely driving directions. For that, a lot, too.

**LANCE:**

That came up in the first session.

**CHARLIE:**

Oh, all the time. I did it today for this. Yeah.

**SHANNON:**

I use it for filling in the blanks, and I work with a lot of community groups through our work with our social marketing campaigns. I'm kind of a liaison to a lot of various levels of community groups and they consistently give me this much information... you know, like just a quarter of the information that I need. So a lot of times, rather than going back to them, because they are just overtaxed with work as it is, I just go to the Internet. I mean, a good example is, I am putting together a spokesperson list, and everyone just shot off names to me like I should know exactly who these people are, when they probably work for like some small public health organization in Northern California. I type in the name, I type in the subject after their name, and boom, I've got who they are. And I've managed to identify this random person from Northern California, and that's really, really helpful because I just don't have the time, and they don't have the time to deal with it.

**LANCE:**

Great. How about you guys down there?

**STEPHANIE:**

I don't know, I think we use it for...

**LANCE:**

The same thing?

**STEPHANIE:**

All of the above. Whether it be, you know, tracking stories or looking up, someone will say, "STEPHANIE, you know, I think that there's this article that came out in the New York Times. Can you check?" Or whatever. And it's just so quick, and so easy, to access information for anything to find out who the groups are, or the organizations are, to do background research. I mean, I, yeah, but I've only been working in PR for a year, so of course I'm very used to using the Internet, and always have used it since I started working. So it would seem weird if I didn't have access to it, I think, now, as opposed to not having access. I mean, I've done the whole looking for articles in libraries and whatnot, but since I've worked, it's always been a given that I would be able to use the Internet. So it would feel really odd.

**MARY:**

We used to have to call the newspapers and say, "Can you send us the newspaper from this date." And which we still do with some of the smaller papers, but yeah, it's phenomenal.

**STEPHANIE:**

Well, I think just when you say that, I mean, the Internet, nowadays, we don't have to make those phone calls any more. It just saves so much time. And that might mean I don't have to leave a message any more. I don't have to wait for a call back. I can go ahead and look and get the address, get the directions or what not. And so in some, I mean, obviously it, it does save a lot of time and you, again, I don't know if it's good or bad, but you, you don't have to necessarily have to have personal contact with a lot of people as you might have had to have a long time ago.

**LANCE:**

So what about it as a communications tool? Do you feel like it's, how has it changed the way that you communicate with your public?

**LINDA:**

I'm LINDA, and I think it's tremendously helped me because we deal with a lot of different groups of people that suffer from chronic diseases, and we make drugs to treat those. And health information is one of the biggest uses that people use the Internet for. And a lot of these groups develop communities, and they are online, and they are posting email messages to each other, you know, about their issues. And I can just monitor groups that are of interest to us, totally anonymously, and find out what they are saying about us, and our products, and our competitors, and what their concerns are, and their issues are. And really help to plan public relations strategy for our organization, and also see, really dramatically see the mis-steps a lot of our competitors have made where they've done something that's really offended the Asian community on some particular product, and um, the way they launched it or the way, whatever their practices were, and you can learn so much from that information that, you know, years ago you'd do all the focus groups, and you'd do all that. That only gives you a small flavor for it.

**LANCE:**

Do you guys, do you participate in any of the conversations, or do you just kind of lurk?

**STEPHANIE:**

Mostly I lurk. Some of them I do participate. It does depend on the group because there are certain groups that have stronger feelings against the corporations, and so those groups you'll just lurk, and you would never post anything. Other groups I will post information specifically, a lot because they know that I am on the list, and then they'll ask a question about something and say, "Well, what about this?" And I will respond. And so it is a good tool to also be able to immediately respond to them when there's questions and to quell rumors very quickly. You know, when something pops up, and I can get right on and say, "No, no, no, here's what it is." "Oh, okay." You know, and it's really good.

**LANCE:**

How about you guys? Do you do the same thing? Do you check out the uh...?

**ANDREW:**

It's kind of a love-hate relationship with the Internet sometimes, because you know, there's just so many sites out there and there's so much going on. And if you have a movie coming out, one little rumor can get out, and it goes on a million sites, and it's impossible to quell that with every site, and every person that's writing about us, or a certain film, or something, or an actor in one of your films, or something like that. For good or bad. Some good comes up, and it's all over the place, and you're like, "Great. This is going well. Look at all these people and all these hits that these sites are getting." But if something comes up and it's false, and the next thing you know, there's millions of people, you know, looking at this information, and you have reporters calling about it. It just makes your work that much tougher, you know, and then you have this crisis on your hands. So it can be really good or really bad, from that perspective. But we also use it as a cost saving tool because rather than having to send out press materials, and send out photos to every reporter with the trade, the papers, we have, we just built our own internal sites. We just built a site for every movie. So you can download the press notes from this site, you can download photos. You know, our own PR is set. So it makes it that much easier for us. We don't have to pay our agencies to send everything out. They let, you know, people come to us.

**LANCE:**

Is that pretty common, do you think reporters now prefer it that way, or do the majority of them want to see hard press kits?

**ANDREW:**

We haven't had a lot of problems with it. A lot of people are just willing to click on the site. I mean, everything's high res, pictures are high res, the notes are there. I mean, there's really no difference. I think sometimes they get upset if you don't send them a little goodie package or DVDs. Don't get their slag. Yeah. They'll get it eventually, but you know, the ease I think they appreciate.

**LANCE:**

What about you guys? Do you, have you converted a lot of it to digital at this point?

**CHARLIE:**

CHARLIE. We put, we actually did a little test I think it was two years ago. We sent out a release over the wire that was just a paragraph. It was really a tease. There was some new legislation that was going to go into effect January 1<sup>st</sup>, around sex education, which related to our teen pregnancy client. And we just did this little tease paragraph and said, "If you want more information, go to the Web site," and a lot of them did. And they could get the whole press release from there and the study that we had done and more information on the law. And they actually did it, and we got incredible coverage from it. It doesn't always work, but I think the timing of it, especially now we are hearing from media that they don't want to receive something in the mail. They are not going to open their mail because of the whole anthrax thing.

**LANCE:**

It doesn't have anything to do with the urgency of what you're sending.

**CHARLIE:**

Uh uh. It was just... we were kinda testing it, to tease them, to see if they would bite on it, and we tried to write something that would intrigue them enough, "I need to know more about this." And they could link to the Web site and get all the information from there.

**JULIE:**

Uh, JULIE. The benefit of having Web sites instead of getting a press kit, is, if any more information it's typically on a Web site. It may not be in that press kit or in the press release. And instead of them having to go through and contact the contact person and go through all that, they can just click elsewhere on a Web site, which I think probably makes it a lot easier, and I know it makes it a lot easier for all of us.

**LANCE:**

So has it changed the urgency of issues for you guys? Do you have to deal with things more quickly?

**PERSON:**

Oh, tremendously.

**LANCE:**

So how has that change taken place? Can you give me an example?

**LINDA:**

Yeah, this is LINDA. News travels so much more quickly now than it ever did, and a small story in one of our...we make blood products. So we collect blood in different centers across the country. And a small story in our center in Kaline, Texas will be on the "Kaline Daily Herald" and then all of a sudden it's on the Web sites everywhere. And you know, people find out much more quickly about things, rumors travel as you were mentioning, you know, much more quickly than they did in the past. And so you have to be right on it. And I think one of the areas that has really helped me as a PR professional, especially in terms of gaining credibility within my organization, a lot of our senior executives are not Tech-savvy, and they barely can open their email. And so I'll be on the Internet always, looking for information about our company, about our competitors, about our industry, things happening, and if I come in in the morning at 7 in the morning and there's an article - like last week, there's an article on Dow Jones about two of our competitors that are talking about in merger talks. And you get that. I copy it. I email it out to all of them, and they get it first thing in the morning, as opposed to having to wait to read the Wall Street Journal later in the day or that night, or hearing about it later from somebody else. And they like being in the know. They like knowing about things before anybody else. So when I can email them stuff really quickly when it's just happened, and then they hear about it, they really appreciate that.

**LANCE:**

So has it elevated PR in your organization in that way?

**LINDA:**

I think dramatically, because I am the eyes and ears for them, out there finding out what's going on. "Hey did you know what this patient group is saying about this drug? Did you hear the news that this company bought that company? Or that this drug was denied approval by the FDA this morning? Or that this product has issued a product recall this



afternoon?" And you can get that information really quickly and get it to them and they look to that, not only as a source of information, but in helping to interpret it. Because I can be there and say, "Look, I know you're planning this marketing campaign and planning to do this, this way. But let me tell you how these patients are going to react. They're going to see it like this, and they're going to respond like that, and this guy, by the name of this in Durham, North Carolina, this is what he's going to do."

And we've had issues with protesters. And being able to track that. I mean, a lot of times I'll know. I'll know before they show up to protest on an issue. I'll say, "They're going to be out in front of our manufacturing plant on Friday at 8 a.m., and this is what they are protesting about." You know, I mean, it's amazing the stuff that you can find out and really know.

**LANCE:**

So I saw you shaking your head when I said, "Are PR practitioners lagards in this area?"

**LINDA:**

I don't think so, no.

**LANCE:**

But you talked about other management in your company.

**LINDA:**

Oh yes, definitely.

**LANCE:**

So, what does everybody else think about that, as far as you don't think PR people are anymore? They pretty much are techies these days?

**CHARLIE:**

This is CHARLIE. They can't be because I mean, we would fail miserably. I think in our industry we had to jump on it. I remember when we launched our Web site for the company that we were before we were acquired. We made a big deal about the first PR firm in Sacramento to be on the World Wide Web. And you know, we felt like we have to be in front of the industry when it comes to things like the Internet and the Web, and pushing our clients. A lot of state

government agencies, it's taken them years to get them on email, and to get them to look at their email and respond to it, and get them to understand they need to be on the Internet. So as PR professionals we HAD to, or we would fail at our jobs.

**LANCE:**

So how has it made your jobs harder?

**CHARLIE:**

Email.

**SHANNON:**

This is SHANNON. I think it's made, well, in general, In PR, you have to know a lot about a lot of things. And you have to be able to sell that you know it. So when you're in a pitch for a client, you have to speak intelligently about how a Web site is built, and how we're going to do this, and this and this, and it's going to be really great, and if you don't talk the talk, and you may be sitting across the table from somebody who does. And you could lose it right there. Because everyone expects you to build a Web site or maintain the one that's already there, or upgrade it, or this and that. You have to know the language. So I think it's put an added pressure in the sense that you don't just have to know PR really well. We have to know PR. We have to know the Web. We have to know everything and be able to speak on it.

**MARY:**

PR is what I do, so I don't know technology. So I'm probably the least tech savvy in this room.

**LANCE:**

How has it changed how you talk to people or your publics or the folks that you're trying to reach for your clients? How has that changed?

**MARY:**

I'm so news media oriented, that the only way it's changed, is, like I said before, I'm MARY speaking now, is just being able to research and follow out of town newspapers and reporters and what they're writing about. I mean, I can check my clients' Web sites, that sort of thing, competitors' Web sites. I occasionally look things up. Maybe if it's only spelling something right, like another

company, or making sure I'm using their trademark correctly. But I don't "do" Web sites. So I don't know how to talk the talk. Wish I did.

**LANCE:**

Does anybody in here program Web sites for their company or for clients?

**STEVE:**

No.

**LANCE:**

And you guys created "[movie title deleted]." That's enough.

**STEVE:**

With shaky cameras.

**LANCE:**

So how has it changed kind of the way you that you train other people about what good PR is in your organizations or how to interact with folks? Has it helped you in anyway in that area? As far as, I guess you talked about earlier that it sort of made your job more important to them. So has it always elevated them wanting to know how to be more PR savvy?

**MARY:**

I think there's definitely more of an understanding of Public Relations in terms of the value and wanting to be careful about how they craft a message or what they say or do. Surprising to me, it's created a real...they are very confused about the difference between a press release and a news story, and I will constantly get, you know, I will send them an article from the Wall Street Journal, and it's like, "You know, can you send me another copy of that press release about blah blah blah?" And I'm like, "That wasn't a press release. That was a news story." And you know, they just don't get the difference. And so, in some regards, it's made it a little more difficult because you have to explain to them sort of the difference.

I had a prior CEO that issued a press release, sent it out over a PR news wire, and they had a little clipping service they got at the time, where they sort of got stuff faxed, the headlines. And he saw the press release and he said,

"That was really great. I saw the press release. It was in the thing this morning." And I said, "Yeah, I worked really hard on that one!" Ha ha ha. They just don't get the difference.

**CHARLIE:**

This is CHARLIE. I noticed that it's used as a measurement tool for a lot of our programs now. For the teen pregnancy work that we do, it's an initiative that's funded by a foundation, and as part of it, they have funded an evaluation team to track not only the other components of the initiative but us, and how well we do our job. And so I have to monitor the hits to the Web site and send that to the evaluation team, and it's used as part of the report to the foundation about whether or not we are doing a good job with our money. So that's definitely a new thing, building it in to our plan, knowing that we are going to be measured on that one thing. Because it's something that's easily quantifiable, too, whereas a lot of other things aren't. And I can say, "You know, last year we had 369,000 hits to the Web site." And they go, "Ooh."

**LANCE:**

This is something you do before, and then do after...

**CHARLIE:**

Exactly. And I try to explain to them, and certainly when we run ads or we put up a billboard with the Web site, it's going to go up, as opposed to the three months we didn't do anything. And then they want to know, "Okay, by how much?" So we are always, I'm having to provide them reports on that.

**LANCE:**

So how is that different from when you started out?

**CHARLIE:**

Well, we, when we first put up the Web site, we viewed it as just an information, just another place that we could send people, so we didn't have to always mail packets out. Because we get all these calls, people saying, "Can you send me the latest statistics on teen pregnancy rates?" And we could say, "Oh, go to the Web site. You can get it there." It wasn't that we were looking to get all these hits. Because we weren't trying to sell anything, or we weren't using it as a marketing tool or a sales tool. But then as

the evaluation team started to come in and demand more results from us, then we had to kind of change how we viewed it, and now we have to sell it back to them as, "Okay, we put up a billboard and then there were 20,000 extra hits to the Web site." Whereas, before, we never even, we didn't even care. It was just another way to get information out.

**LANCE:**

Was there an evaluation, was it the same pressure before the Web? So were you kinda held to the same standards?

**CHARLIE:**

No, well, I think the evaluation before was always the number of media clips that you got, how the message was, because that's we always explain it. We not only count the clips in the inches, but was the CEO quoted the right way? Were the facts straight? Were you positioned the right way? It's not beyond that. I just did my report this week to them, and they wanted all the impressions, but then they always wanted all the Web site information.

**LANCE:**

So the same thing for you MARY? Do you use it in that way? Just showing your clients what you've done for them?

**MARY:**

No. Because my clients are different. I represent, I do public relations for an international corporation just in Southern California, for them. So what we do here really wouldn't reflect on their national Web. I mean, I wouldn't be able to distinguish what we do here, you know, I mean, they can't track Southern California hits on their site.

**LANCE:**

Right. So you are mostly on the front end of kinda just keeping up to speed with new...

**MARY:**

How I use it, yeah, but I was actually thinking something else, I forget. Someone else said. I mean, sort of self-promotion. I have found that because my business is promotion, I do not have a Web site for my company, and that's because there's no way in the world, I as one person, can compete with these really flashy agency Web sites. I don't know if you've looked at any of...I mean, probably all of you guys have. And I often wonder what the, you know,

how much time a PR agency spends on its own Web site.  
Because...

**CHARLIE:**

Not enough.

**MARY:**

It just seems like it could make or break you. I mean, we're in this business.

**LANCE:**

Is it the same thing that PR has a PR problem?

**CHARLIE:**

Absolutely.

**LANCE:**

Too busy doing it for other people?

**PERSON:**

We can tell our clients how to communicate, you know, to their employees or do internal communications and then we do a terrible job of it. So....

**MARY:**

It's intimidating to me.

**STEVE:**

Why don't you just find a graphic design client, tell him you'll do some free work, and trade off.

**MARY:**

But then you have to keep the Web site up. It's not a static...

**STEVE:**

Keep publicizing your client. They'll be doing work for you then.

**LANCE:**

What do you guys dislike most about the Web?

**ANDREW:**

Just the amount of tracking involved. I mean, it's ridiculous what you have to keep up with. I mean, you can never see everything that's on the Web on every site, 24

hours a day. And some of it, like I said, can be really damaging to what you're doing. And it can be just a real pain in the ass just going through it, just everyday, couple of times a day, just checking out the key sites. To find out where people are getting their information from. That's what I dislike most about it, just the work that it brings upon everybody, at our level.

**SHANNON:**

I don't have a dislike so much as a frustration with it, in that the types of campaigns that we do, because they are for government or social issues, not enough people are on the World Wide Web that need the information I have to give. Because we are usually talking about high-risk communities, those that desperately need to be accessing our information. Those that are least likely to trust professionals, and physicians, and things like that, about issues. And there's a Web site sitting there, and there's a wealth of information about the issues, and people just aren't accessing it. And California is extremely progressive as a state, but I'm from the Midwest originally, and in that area of the country it's very low usage right now still. So that's kind of just a general dislike is, it's just not as widely available as I really wish it would be for some of these lower income audiences and more rural audiences, and things like that.

**MARY:**

I'm MARY. This is probably going to reflect my news background. But I worry a lot about the lack of standard for things that are written on the Web. For example, you know, when you are a reporter for a newspaper, there's a standard of journalism of accuracy, and fairness, and all that stuff.

**PERSON:**

Hopefully.

**MARY:**

Well, okay. That's true. That could be missing in newspapers, as well. But on the Web it's such a free for all, and, of course, that's the charm of it.

**LANCE:**

Do you think that's completely a challenge, or is that something you can actually use to your advantage in some way?

**MARY:**

Oh sure, well, I could, but I don't. Just 'cuz. But I see it, I see it on other Web sites. Just fantastic claims and...

**LANCE:**

Well that's a good, good question. I mean, how has it changed kind of the balance between the press that probably all of you deal with in some form or fashion and the folks that you're trying to reach? Has it changed that dynamic in any way?

**ANDREW:**

It's a lot easier to distort things now. I mean, when some of these sites came up for us, for movie sites, when movie sites popped up and they have movie review, data pools, and people go in and post their reviews. Now all it is, is studio execs and \_\_\_ going out and you know, John Q. Public, and this movie is sweet. That's all it is. And there's nothing truthful at all.

**MARY:**

So what's the point?

**ANDREW:**

If we've got a movie out there, and we're going to put it on this Web site, a million people will go in there, and tell everybody it's great, posing as other people. Nobody's going to know.

**LANCE:**

It's a good tactic.

**CHARLIE:**

I was going to say, that's now one of the things we discuss when we are brainstorming campaigns. We call it, "Let's do a viral campaign. Let's start..." And it's amazing to me. Three or four years ago it wasn't... or two years ago it wasn't a tactic that we would employ for campaigns.



I just got one a couple of weeks ago, that Campbell's was doing one, and Coke was doing one. And they were floating around our agency as, "Oh, this is a great example of a viral marketing campaign." I'm thinking, "Okay, are we making this stuff up?"

**STEVE:**

If you put enough resources to it, it will work.

**CHARLIE:**

Yeah, they're putting a lot of money behind it, and they're calling it a campaign tactic now, much like media relations are building a Web site and, "Let's start, and we need to reach young people. How can we get to young people? Ooh, I know, we'll set up a site and we'll get people to..." It's amazing. I don't work on those accounts.

**PERSON:**

I'm amazed it has a name. I hadn't heard that before.

**CHARLIE:**

Oh yeah.

**STEVE:**

It's like guerilla marketing.

**ANDREW:**

Full on.

**CHARLIE:**

And they're trying to get to the trend setters to get them to start. But a lot of times the PR people are writing that email and forwarding it, saying, "Hey, forward this to your friends," and trying to get it started. Much like you were saying. It used to be actually genuine when people did that.

**ANDREW:**

That's how Blair Witch started.

**CHARLIE:**

That's exactly. They take that as the great example.

**PERSON:**

That was manufactured?

**ANDREW:**

Oh yeah.

**PERSON:**

I'm so naive.

**LINDA:**

They didn't even advertise until after the movie was a big hit.

**ANDREW:**

All on the Internet. It was all hype.

**CHARLIE:**

But the sad thing is now PR people have figured that out, and they are going to try to do it for everything, and it's going to ruin it, and probably it's already started to.

**STEVE:**

That's how this country works. That you ride on something until it's worn out. Just like the technology fad.

**CHARLIE:**

...the tipping point. Knock them out.

**STEVE:**

There was a documentary about the rise and fall of the dot-coms. It's called Start of the Dot Com. Rent it.

**PERSON:**

Is that real?

**STEVE:**

It's an actual movie, yeah.

**PERSON:**

No, I know it's an actual movie, but are you doing that as a joke?

**LANCE:**

Guys, the ones of you that produce things. Like pamphlets or materials. How do you use the Web to do that? Or does it help you in any way?

**PERSON:**

To make it happen, or once it's finished?

**LANCE:**

To make it a whole process as far as when you're putting it together, getting materials for it, you know, how do you use the Web to do that?

**CHARLIE:**

We do all of our research now. I remember I had a book of state government agencies from like 1997 or something. And I used to, whenever I was looking for demographic data mostly, I'd have to call the different units, and now I can just go on and type it all in, it's instant. It's amazing.

**MARY:**

I subcontracted out to write a brochure for someone else's client, you know what I'm saying? Like the someone else hired me to do the writing for it. So I didn't have any direct contact with the client. So all I did was, I looked at their Web site to learn about them. It's amazing. It's great. So for all I know, someone planted this information.

**LANCE:**

So can you describe career for a PR practitioner that's going through corporate?

**LINDA:**

Ahh, that's a good question. I don't know if there is a typical career path.

**LANCE:**

Well, I'm going to follow it up with how has the Web changed that, or has it changed the way that a practitioner comes up through the ranks these days? And that's a question for both agency and corporate.

**LINDA:**

I can't quite answer that question. Just quite yet. Ask me in a couple of years.

**BARBARA:**

Did you go to school for it?

**LINDA:**

No. For PR? No. So this is like, I'm brand new.

**BARBARA:**

But how did you get there?

**LINDA:**

How did I get to PR? Word of mouth. Kind of suggested. I never thought about it. I didn't study anything about it. It just kinda happened.

**SHANNON:**

I actually have an interesting example of how it's actually worked against us in terms of hiring and ascension in the PR world. We're currently hiring for a position, and I just used some, you know, sent a couple of emails out to people I know in the network, young professionals, PR students and such. And the next thing you know, we find out that someone else in our firm is claiming that they saw it on Monster.com, this posting of our job, which I don't understand because I didn't pay for it to be on Monster.com, so how in the world is that on there? So CHARLIE and I are on the phone saying, "How in the world did this happen?" She is checking out Monster.com, seeing if it is actually on there. It turns out that someone took my email, posted it to the Annenberg School of Communications alumni Web site, and I'm getting emails from all around the country from people who had gone to USC, applying for the position. Yes, it's great, but it's also, we hadn't highly publicized this position.

**CHARLIE:**

We sent out a couple of emails.

**SHANNON:**

Right, I sent out a couple of emails and all of a sudden it's an onslaught, and that is the World Wide Web. Like, boom, boom, boom, all of a sudden, [company name omitted]'s hiring. It goes all the way across to Maine. Had it not been there, I would probably have gotten a couple of emails back from the people I sent emails to, or you'd remove that process all together. What? Six or seven years ago I would have just put an ad in the LA Times and gotten every nub off from here to whatever applying for our job. But I thought it was so interesting that within hours that all happened. And that's the world.

**CHARLIE:**

You haven't seen your desk yet.

**SHANNON:**

No, I haven't seen my desk yet, but my name has gone wide and far. So certainly with hiring, World Wide Web, definitely making an impact, good and bad. In terms of ascending in our firm, I don't know if it so much makes you stand out or anything to be elevated, but you really...

**LANCE:**

I'm just talking about if you're an expert or if you're typically if you're very good at...

**CHARLIE:**

I think it's the price of admission. I think, you know, you need to know what's going on or you're not going to, you're not going to move up. Because we have, I think every single client has a Web site that we've either created or we run or we manage or we write content for, and these are government agencies. These are not your typical revenue generating Web sites. It's just for information and resources, but what's interesting for state government is that they have very strict regulations. That Governor Davis is like, "Okay, all the state Web sites are going to look this way, you are going to do this, you're going do that." So we have a lot of different regulations to follow. If you don't know what you're doing, you can't work on many clients.

**PERSON:**

But I'm curious. Have you heard of specific examples where knowing something about the Web actually got someone a better position within their company?

**LANCE:**

You were talking about it earlier, there's this whole thing being an information entrepreneur, and if you're in the organization and you're kinda plugged in, now that's kinda not as important as it used to be because it's sort of ubiquitous these days, and so '98, it doesn't seem very long ago...

**CHARLIE:**

I think it's the difference between agencies. Like in agency, everyone had be in the know, or it's expected that every single person at every level knows what's going on. But I think in a corporation, or in a setting like yours, they'll expect you to know, and they don't even want to know.

**LINDA:**

Yeah, I think in Public Relations being an expert is definitely expected. But I do think in terms of the career path, yeah, I think as they say, "Information is power." And the more information you have access to and you can provide that meaningfully, and I think it's not just having the access to the information, it's being able to interpret it, and a lot of it goes along with the strategy and being a counselor to senior management, which is what PR always strives to be. That it really gets you in there. Because it's not enough to just go say, "Oh, here, I found those pressure leaks," on the Internet. No, you know, it's, "Hey, did you hear these two companies are merging? And this is the amount of money they are saying it's worth? And did you know that there's a shortage of this product over here?" And being able to help the company formulate strategy based on the information that you are gathering. It has to be relevant information. Because then there's just so much like you said, garbage out there, that it's hard to keep track of it all.

**MARY:**

I actually have a question that may be of interest to you, and I hope I can express it right. But the agencies are hired to build and maintain and create content for Web sites, and yet I wonder if in the corporate world, and I used to work in the world of academe, and one of the problems that I had, they would have the techies doing the Web sites, and they did not connect the Web site to PR.

**LANCE:**

Yeah, we could do an entire focus group on...

**LINDA:**

Not anymore. No, I took it away from them. I mean, maybe in the early days, in the early days, yeah, that was the thing. And we even had, we didn't have a Web site, but even our Intranet, when they first started building it in the IT department, because I do a lot of employee communications, you know, they know how to use the technology. They had no idea what to put on it. And so they post stuff there. They had like, you know, "The quote of the day." And then they had recipes. And then there was this, "Coming Soon," section. Birthdays. And I started getting all of these things from employees, "I don't want my birthday on the Intranet. How dare you publish that. That's confidential." And I had to go and say, "Look, all content up there is

going to come through me. You guys aren't going to come up with your own."

**MARY:**

But that didn't happen automatically. What I'm saying is, I don't think there is, or was, I'm glad to hear there is, but at first, an automatic link that thinking that a Web site is just another communication tool.

**LINDA:**

Oh it is definitely now. I mean, I don't think anyone would dream of having the techies do the content. Yes, you want to have them there on it. But you're competing against all the other companies that have very professional Web sites. And your company and your CEO doesn't want to be the one with the Web site with the stuff misspelled and the product name nowhere to be found because they didn't think about that.

**LANCE:**

I used to do a lot of consulting, and I always had, that was the biggest battle is, the ones in high school that were the AV coordinator I faced, that this was 5-6-7 years ago. And it's definitely changed since then.

So some other questions I want to ask is, asking mostly a room full of women, this is kind of an interesting question, but do you feel there are any gender differences in the way that people use technology or the way PR practitioners use technology these days?

**LINDA:**

I think it's more of an age generation difference.

**LANCE:**

That's another question, too.

**STEVE:**

I'm sorry to interrupt. But we're in a business that's predominantly women, or can I say homosexuals? So me and ANDREW are a rarity in the entertainment publicity field. So... That's my point.

**LINDA:**

I think to some degree it's an age thing, but I do find like even among our senior management, it's really more a

philosophy in who you are. If you are the kind of person that kinds to seek out new things, and do new things, and I think people in PR tend to be the ones that are interested in the current events and the news and what's happening and what's new. And so I think they were more early adopters of the technology. I don't think it's just an age thing because I have people who are in their 50s and 60s that are all over the Internet and they just love it. Then there are people that are younger that can barely open the attachment in their email or they don't know how to do anything. I don't think there's as big a difference among women and men in terms of use.

**ANDREW:**

I don't see how there could be any correlation between gender and Internet usage at all.

**LANCE:**

There used to be.

**PERSON:**

Except that it's an equalizer because there's no face any more, so there's no opportunity to discriminate against anybody when you and I can go to the same Web site and get the same exact information. But if we were face to face with a person, they're going to automatically make a differentiation between us. They would see ethnicity, they would see height, weight, gender, all an equalizer now.

**LINDA:**

Also, can I say, the difference, it used to be men were the first adopters of the Internet, the techies or, you know they were the ones that were first on it an all over it. But I think it's changed a lot. You know who that guy is, right? Ha ha ha. I think it's changed a lot and the interesting thing that I see and especially among senior management, is, and it's sad to say, a lot more women know how to type and so what I've found is like the senior executives, most of them don't know how to type, because they never had to know.

**ANDREW:**

When you go on the Internet, you don't have to know how to type. You just type in 'www'



**LINDA:**

But they're very, they're not as comfortable with it. It's like they sit down, "Well, what am I supposed to do?" And so women...

**BARBARA:**

Secretaries type.

**LINDA:**

Exactly. And so they just weren't comfortable. I mean, I sit down there, and just whip through it. And so now in PR and now just in general in the world, like all our lawyers, they all obviously have to type, and they're all on their computers all the time, and that didn't used to be the way it was. So I think it's equalizing it more. In the health care field, I will say a lot of our patient communities, especially diseases affecting children, the mothers are the ones that are more proactive about getting there, and getting information. So it will be a lot more skewed. They are more likely to be on the Internet because they want to find the information out about this disease that affects their child. And I think that happens a lot.

**MARY:**

I imagine in general it's probably more women that seek more health information on the Internet overall.

**LANCE:**

So what do you guys think is the next big thing for PR? On the Web?

**PERSON:**

That's a good question.

**ANDREW:**

It's gotta be the real-time broadcasting. If you've got something in our industry where you want to put a movie trailer up or a clip or a little spot. Real time right there. People want instant access. No wait, whatsoever. I mean, that's already out there now, but I mean, they could take it a step further. There are things they can expand on, I think.

**PERSON:**

But you're talking about direct communication, no intermediary.

**CHARLIE:**

I was thinking, someone sent me a newsclip, an email, that I was able to click on and watch the video coverage of. And I just sat there fascinated by that, and I wouldn't have to order the tape, wait three weeks for it to show up. I could actually watch the clip from last night's newscast on my computer. And then I could forward it to the client.

**ANDREW:**

Or just being able to watch the newscast that's on right now.

**CHARLIE:**

And we did that with the Governor's "State of the State" address. We were all at our desks working. We reduced the screen so we could watch and listen to the Governor's address while we were working. And I remember thinking, "Okay, this is not real."

**ANDREW:**

If you are in a crisis situation, and all of a sudden you need your CEO from your company, and he goes up and speaks, and you can broadcast that over the Internet, I mean, that's great usage. You don't waste any time to watch, and it's 4:31 and you have to be out by 5. If you're battling East Coast deadlines, you know, put it on right away.

**PERSON:**

And no intermediary too. I think that's...I didn't even think of that. From a crisis standpoint I mean, right now, if you have a crisis, it's immediately evolving and like you said you want to put your CEO up, you've got to call the news stations and get them to put them on, and they may or may not put them live, and if they don't, then they are going to edit out segments. And you can put them right up there from your office. If you have a video camera, just go live.

**STEVE:**

It's all about convenience. That's the key.

**SHANNON:**

I think that'll be the main thing. Newspapers are worried that no one's going to want a physical paper any more, but they're not going to get any material. I think advertisers and maybe PR people are going to go directly to their

audiences. I'm not sure how exactly. But yeah, if your company wants to get information out, maybe in-person press conferences will be a thing of the past. That'll be done over the Internet. Paper press releases are quickly becoming a thing of the past already.

**LANCE:**

So do any of you guys use it for, do you do any online special events for clients?

**SHANNON:**

You mean conducting them real time?

**PERSON:**

I've seen other people that have done it. We haven't.

**SHANNON:**

Well, it wouldn't work for us. Because we're an issue based, our audiences don't trust the Internet fully yet. And so there's still a lot to be said for...

**CHARLIE:**

They want to see it, touch it, be in contact with it.

**SHANNON:**

Definitely. I mean, they often go to our Web site after they talk with us, and perhaps they have gone to the Web site directly for research purposes, but I don't see that as being as applicable as other industries.

I was going to say though in terms of where it's going or what would be most helpful in PR, I don't know if it's the World Wide Web so much as our way of accessing it, because I think as technology improves, and as we are able to carry around little computer screens with us, and immediately access the Web constantly wherever I am, just like I can dial my cell phone, if I can immediately look at CNN or whatever is immediate. Because I was thinking about September 11. I spent the following day, because that day I was off work and I watched CNN all day. But the next day it just constantly, CNN, update, update, update. And that was how I spent my whole entire day. I didn't want to leave my desk because I didn't want to stop knowing what was happening all the time. So if I could have that in my hand, and I could leave the office, and go do all the other things, like I was telling you, I spent all day at a

conference today, but I would have loved to access information. It gives you the edge. So technology improved and that's the capacity that we have, I think it'll really revolutionize the industry in terms of just being completely mobile all the time. Telecommuting. We won't need offices anymore, to be honest with you, because you can fax, email, read the paper, do everything on one little thing.

**MARY:**

My clients don't know that I'm wearing pajamas. I am in slippers all day long.

**PERSON:**

But you're still as effective.

**LANCE:**

Mine always complain when I wear pajamas. So um, I think we're about out of time, but I'd like to kind of go around and maybe get a final thought from everybody and make sure we've covered all the issues that we need to, so we can start this way, this time.

**LINDA:**

Oh, the Internet. I mean, there's just so much I could talk about. This is LINDA. It really does revolutionize the way I do my job. I mean, I am with CHARLIE. When I was in college, we didn't have access to the Internet. We didn't have, we barely had computers. We didn't have computers. What am I talking about? But it truly has changed PR and how things are done and communications. I think for the most part for the better. I do have the concerns that while it's good for us from PR for a certain degree because we don't have those gatekeepers and we can just get our message directly out, I'm also concerned about credibility, and like I said, people not understanding the difference between an article in the New York Times, which has gone through review by editors and has certain legal restrictions so they won't say things that aren't true; vs. urban legends, which I'm sure in the urban industry you guys see a lot of this. I'm just appalled by the number of employees in our office that will forward these emails along. "Oh my God, if you see someone without their headlights, don't flash the headlights because it's a gang initiation. They are going to kill you." Kentucky Fried Chicken. There's another one. Companies that are targets of these urban legends, you know? And it does appall me, the kind of stuff that people will believe. They were forwarding one around our office the

other day, and it was, "Oh my gosh, in San Diego this woman went to an ATM machine, and made a deposit. She licked the envelope, and there was cyanide on the envelope and 3 people have now died." And I said, "Wait a minute. Don't you think on television news they show every car chase there is on the freeway, and if three people had died from cyanide on the ATM envelope, you would have heard it someplace else? You think maybe they'd be covering it?" So I think credibility is going to be a big issue.

**ANDREW:**

There's going to be a lot of good things, and a lot of bad things. I wish I could be a little more specific, but in some ways they don't even talk about the future of the Internet. In our business it might rule out the rental video business. People are going to have access to movies on the computer. They are not going to go to Blockbuster to rent anything. There goes our home video profit. The DVDs and VHS, you're not going to need that. You'll be able to download it on a computer. Whether or not it's pirated or whether or not somebody pioneers a system where the studios band together and kind of like a Napster thing and they regulate it. Somebody's going to lose money, and somebody's going to make money. So good, and bad. And also it takes away some of the personal effects from a PR standpoint. Now there's so much you can do via the Internet and email and everything, but I hate to see people quit picking up the phone and talk to somebody altogether, because there's a personal portion of that you just can't rely on. I mean, I'd much rather have somebody call me if they've got a really good idea or if they're pitching something to me, or if they are just...I'd rather hear something really good on the phone in person than in an email, or "Check this out on the Web site," and have to figure it out myself. I'd rather speak to them in person or on the phone. So, I don't want people to use the personal touch.

**CHRIS:**

I think for me, it's the opposite sometimes, because in this business a lot of personalities with vendors, clients, press. You want to get your point across sometimes just through email rather than verbally, and I think it's a really good communication tool. Plus, you cover your end in the situations where you have to CC people, and, "Hey I sent you that email, you got it, right?" So you're covering your butt. So, I think it's a good tool.

**STEPHANIE:**

I much more miss the personal touch. I realize the benefits of the Internet and, actually, when I went to college, we first really didn't use the Internet. It was only after being abroad and coming back that I realized in that one year in the United States I totally missed out, and I had to like, catch up. And it's about playing catch up, almost because everything is so instant these days, it's so immediate. And I still feel like I'm playing catch up with trying to learn whatever the lingo or trying to figure out things. But I'm also the person, I agree, if I have an idea, I always immediately call, and I don't think about the email, and I think, "You know, I do have to start cc'ing all these people."

And I think one of the dangers, and I think we all realize it, too, is just again getting deciphering, sorting out the junk that's out there. And even though it's so quick, and so immediate, and so great, to have at your finger tips, it also can be rather time consuming, because you really have to think, and do a lot of comparing and contrasting and really go through the material and thing, "Umm, is this, is this not?" But I think it's really exciting because I really do feel that our society is moving towards becoming completely and totally mobile, and everything is going to be instant. And again I'm afraid about kind of losing that personal touch and getting a feel of a person's voice, when you hear someone's voice and establishing some kind of rapport with just a personal contact instead of doing it through email or reading it on the Web, where you have so much time to craft everything, to make it sound so perfect.

**JULIE:**

I really can't remember a time when there wasn't Internet, and I know that sounds kind of bad, but I've always used it for everything, from school papers in high school to research I'm doing now.

And there are definitely benefits depending on which public you are targeting. But there's drawbacks as well. I also work with low and fixed income customers and I have grass roots outreach efforts. So I don't use the Internet so much as a tool for my clients, but just basically a tool for me. So I can get the research, so I know what's going on, and I use email for just about everything, including, so I can cc everyone and know bases are covered that way.

And I am one of those people who has 50 folders in my inbox, so I know where everything is, just in case. I happen to love the Internet but again that's because I really don't know anything different.

**WOMAN:**

I am the exact opposite. If you were to compare our email boxes, you can tell we're from almost a different generation because I am so disorganized and I keep everything, and she's able to look at it quickly and discard it. I'm like, "I must keep this."

**MARY:**

I'm MARY and I'm pretty much ditto about everything here. Like what you were saying, in my case I used it more for me than my clients. It's like having the world in my home office. I don't think I could be doing what I'm doing today without it. Don't see how I could have my own business working out of my home without the Internet. But I also, it is somewhat of a source of stress to me, because I also feel a little inadequate, technology. Thank God my husband is an engineer, so I have a live-in IT person. If I didn't I don't know what I would do. So I do have this kind of constant concern that I am not keeping up with technology. I don't know how to do a Web site.

And the other thing I am noticing in my media relations business is that most of my knowledge about media relations is because I used to be in the media. But it's been a while since I have, so I'm losing touch with how reporters are doing their jobs. They aren't doing it the way I used to. It's still somewhat of an unknown to me whether I can just send out a cold, like an email pitch that reporters are liking that sort of thing, or if you should. It used to be originally in this business, it was considered impolite to pitch by email unless the reporter specifically said, "I like email pitches." And I think that's changed. I don't know for sure.

So I go through a lot of guessing how reporters are doing their job these days, how much they use the Internet. I don't really know.

**LANCE:**

Well, it sounds like from what everybody's saying, it's totally changed as far as what reporters expect.

**MARY:**

Yeah, that's what I'm guessing, but I don't know for sure, because it wasn't like that when I was...

**PERSON:**

I think it really depends, because I will read a lot of background about something, and some of them really would rather just be pitched to the old way, and it's because again what you are saying, it's what you're used to.

**MARY:**

I've heard people say they never look at their email.

**PERSON:**

And others say, "Please don't send this."

**CHRIS:**

You get 4000 phone calls a day, and it's all...

**MARY:**

So it's just another dimension of us having to sort of strategize and figure out the best way to do our jobs. Sometimes it's great and sometimes, you know, that's it.

**SHANNON:**

I have many final comments.

**LANCE:**

Go ahead.

**SHANNON:**

I actually took some notes. I just thought of some things I feel like sharing with the group. First of all, it's made the WorldWide Web, in terms of my particular job, it's made me extremely responsive to my clients. I had a client call me on Tuesday and said this CSI, the show on CBS, just called her to verify a fact, something about a statistic, and she's with the DMV there, and she called me and she said, "Can you verify this?" And I said, "No, but give me two minutes." Boom, boom, boom. Check out a couple of Web sites, I actually checked out her Web site, I found the answer, but I looked like a genius because I called her back within ten minutes with the answer. I emailed her all of the specifics. She forwarded that off to the producer of the show, done. The whole issue is done.



But I jumped right on it, and had I not been really savvy with search engines and this and that, and digging around sites until you find what you need, I probably wouldn't have been able to answer the question. And that probably happens at least a couple of times a week, if not more, where clients just depend on me to know things that they probably just as easily access. But again it might be the age thing that we were talking about earlier, maybe it's just that she's not as savvy with it as I am. So I guess going back to your, "Can this make you ascend in your job?" Possibly. It the client rate is about how brilliant you are, and your supervisor picks up on it.

Also in terms of social marketing, I think like I said before, if we can get over the World Wide Web, not being in everyone's household, if it eventually is, it could absolutely revolutionize the way that social marketing is done, because it's based on one-on-one contact to motivate behavioral change. The best way to do that is to talk to LINDA directly, talk to Don directly. I can do that through the Web and through our site, and the more the technology advances, the more I have to cut out every other middle man that might translate my information and just give it directly to them. Plus people can get all the information that they need. I mean, it still shocks me that people smoke because there's how many Web sites that'll tell you that it's dangerous and there's...I'm sorry if there's smokers in the room. But seriously, yhere's as much information as you would possibly need to know that it'll kill you. And I think that again if I'm starting to give a message directly tailored to a person, that that will begin change, and I think the only way to do that is the Web.

Third, I think it may eventually reduce PR tactics that people have to employ. For example, the pedometer lady that I sat next to in this conference said that her friend made \$2 million last year, selling pedometers over the Internet. That little thing that measures how many steps you take in a day. Two million dollars this woman makes. She's an exercise physiologist and her tactic is that every single day she goes onto her Web site. She updates it with the latest research, with some little tips from her, and she's an expert so people love her, and it keeps them coming back to the Web site. So if they don't buy the first time they come to the Web site, they'll buy it the second time, or the third time. Two million dollars after overhead, and she

works out of her house. I thought that was amazing. And she has two PR tactics. Her Web site and she goes to conferences. And that's it. That's it. So I think for some people that that could really help reduce...

**PERSON:**

Well, she sold you one. So it obviously works.

**SHANNON:**

I have one. I know.

Fourth, I don't know where this all fits in, but in terms of my evaluation of other people's PR, I'm trying to find a honeymoon location right now, and I have to tell you, I'm evaluating the place that I will stay based on their Web sites. I'm absolutely basing on...and you make an excellent point. If it is not up to the standards that I expect, I will immediately walk away from it. I expect really high quality, I expect full information, I expect virtual tours. I would love real time. There's some that have pictures of the current moment in Aruba on the beach, and you can like go on there, and they'll say what the temperature is, and where the sun is at. I expect that. And if I don't see it, I go to the next thing. So that's making me evaluate how I am doing our client's Web sites, and what people are expecting from my Web site. So in terms of evaluating other people's PR, that's a definite factor for me.

So those are my four comments.

**LANCE:**

That's great.

**CHARLIE:**

This is CHARLIE. I just, I like it for the information. I like that I can get the weather anywhere in the world, directions, I can buy stuff. I can research data for clients, I can do personal stuff for myself. That's all. I mean, I went to college with a typewriter, and I functioned just fine.

My first email address was a CompuServe thing, it was like 20 numbers. Remember? And one person could get on the Internet at a time in our office. And I mean, it's just, I like it that I can get on so quick now and by myself. I don't have to tell anyone to get off the Internet so I can get on. I'm just happy with the simple things.

Oh, the one thing I thought of, too, was that the services that get dumped into my mailbox, you can set up on the different Web sites with key words and stuff - love that.

**LANCE:**

Like newsletters?

**CHARLIE:**

Yeah. The newsletters. Once you go in and set it up, it just automatically goes in like a Prof Net, which is huge now. The reporters can send all their inquiries. I've responded to a lot of those. So it's been great. That's all.

**LANCE:**

I really appreciate you guys coming, and if you have any questions for me, I'd be glad to answer them. Otherwise, you're free to take off.

**EVERYONE:**

Good luck.

**PERSON:**

I'm interested in your vision of the future.

**LANCE:**

I think that it'll become increasing invisible. What I mean by that, it'll be ubiquitous, you don't really think about it. It's already become that way so much more since I last did this, four years ago. Four years ago it was a completely different world and so it's amazing to me how quickly it's changed and I expect it to continue to do that until it's just not something that you think about at all. And there's not people that don't use it.

**CHARLIE:**

The fact that it can be always running. Because I remember when it couldn't be that way.

**LANCE:**

That's a big thing. I mean, I work in the entertainment industry now. So that's a big thing for us, that people have computers in the same rooms as their televisions, and things like that. It's really starting to happen. And so it's....

**PERSON:**

I think the biggest change will be direct communication, and PR will happen. So there will probably be a way that we can really make distinct audiences.

**SHANNON:**

It's kind of making us hostage to information, too. I really dislike the fact that I can immediately have a thought and call CHARLIE. Like any time of day.

**CHARLIE:**

You dislike that?

**SHANNON:**

It just bugs me that you have stuff on all the time. I can email, I can instant message, I can call on the cell phone, I can page somebody. I can constantly contact almost...

But the point is that, is that what it's become? And having DSL and having the Internet all the time, and having these things pop up at me, that alert me to things going on in the news. And having IM's so someone can immediately get to me. And feeling like I need to immediately respond to it. It's making my life stressful. I feel pressure. I feel pressure.

**PERSON:**

When people sent things by mail, at least you had some time to wait for it, and think about it.

**SHANNON:**

But PR industry, like I said, responsiveness. We are held accountable to a high level of responsiveness. But never before. And you're saying '98. I can totally agree. '98, absolutely. You had a couple of days to get back to somebody. It was reasonable. Well, now it's not.

**PERSON:**

Well, we get international. That's the biggest thing for us. I get more international email. We're in Sri Lanka and we want to sell your products here, and I'm a patient in China and I need donations of this drug.

**LANCE:**

Because you think about it, there's 450 million people worldwide that have access. There's probably 250 million of

those that are on once a month or something like that. But that is a very small percentage of the world. So it's just unimaginable to think about when it is ubiquitous how things will change. And it's amazing.

**PERSON:**

Thank God my mother never figured the Internet out. Talk about being hostages.

**PERSON:**

Good luck with your research. Good luck.

**LANCE:** Thanks a lot. I appreciate it.

End of Transcription

Lance Porter - 1/17/02

Focus Group, Session II

Appendix IV: Survey Email Cover Letter  
Dear PR Professional,

Would you please help us learn how the World Wide Web is affecting the practice of public relations by completing a survey linked at the bottom of this letter? I am a doctoral student in public relations at the University of Georgia and am conducting this research for my dissertation. I hope you will give me a few minutes of your valuable time to answer some questions about your use of the World Wide Web.

Your name was selected in a scientific, random sample of Georgia PRSA members. The embedded link below will take you to a user-friendly questionnaire located on a secure Web site. We designed the survey so that you may complete it in 10 minutes or less. In exchange for your help, I will enter your name in a drawing to receive **four free passes to any Disney theme park in the country. In addition, another 50 respondents will receive a free Disney movie gift.** Please take a moment and access this questionnaire by clicking on the highlighted link.

By participating in this survey, you will make an important contribution to the body of knowledge in public relations, and you'll help our field learn more about the many opportunities and challenges that the Internet brings to the public relations workplace.

Your thoughts and opinions are very important to us. Confidentiality is promised to all survey participants. This research is being conducted through the doctoral program in Public Relations in the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia. This program recently ranked fourth in the nation among the top 16 "premiere" graduate programs in public relations.

To access the questionnaire please click on this embedded link:  
<http://www.xxxxxx.edu/xxxxxx> Please complete this survey by March 11. To receive an electronic copy of the executive summary of this research, please indicate so on the last page of the survey. We anticipate being able to distribute this information in May.

If you have any questions, please email me at [lvporter@uga.edu](mailto:lvporter@uga.edu), or my major professor, Lynne Sallot, Ph.D., APR, Fellow PRSA, Associate Professor, at [sallot@uga.edu](mailto:sallot@uga.edu).

Sincerely,  
Lance Porter  
Doctoral Candidate  
Public Relations  
Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication  
University of Georgia

PS. To be eligible for the Disney prizes, be sure to complete the entire survey ASAP!

For questions or problems about your rights with regard to this survey, please call or write:  
Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia,  
606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411  
Telephone (706) 542 6514; Email Address [IRB@uga.edu](mailto:IRB@uga.edu)

## Appendix V: Survey Instrument

### Part I: Internet Use

The following questions measure your use of new technologies in your practice of public relations.

1. Of the following tools, which do you use to access the Internet? (Check all that apply).

Email

World Wide Web

Wireless Internet Device (Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), cell phone, etc.)

2. How many hours per week do you use email in your practice of public relations?

0 hours per week

5 hours or less

6-10 hours per week

11-20 hours per week

21-30 hours per week

31-40 hours per week

40+ hours per week

3. How many hours per week do you use the World Wide Web in your practice of public relations?

0 hours per week

5 hours or less

6-10 hours per week

11-20 hours per week

21-30 hours per week

31-40 hours per week

40+ hours per week

4. How many hours per week do you access the Internet through a wireless device (Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), cell phone, etc.?)

0 hours per week

5 hours or less

6-10 hours per week

11-20 hours per week

21-30 hours per week

31-40 hours per week

40+ hours per week

5. How does your office access the World Wide Web (please check one):

Broadband (Cable, DSL, Cable, T3, T1, etc./Always On)  
Dial Up/Modem (56K or lower)

## **Part II: World Wide Web Use**

The following questions will measure your use of the World Wide Web in your practice of public relations. [At no time = 1, 2 = less than once per month, 3 = a few times a month, 4 = a few times a week, 5 = all the time]

1. How often do you use the Web for research?
2. How often do you use the World Wide Web to monitor your competition?
3. How often do you use the Web to monitor the news in your practice of public relations?
4. How often do you use the Web to conduct research in preparation for public relations campaigns?
5. How often do you use the Web to prepare client and prospect presentations?
6. How often do you use the Web to "improve a pitch" by researching individual reporters and previous stories these reporters have written?
7. How often do you use the Web to evaluate your public relations efforts?
8. How often do you use the Web to track press release usage by the media?
9. How often do you use Web site traffic (e.g. number of Web site "hits," unique users, page views) to show results for your public relations efforts?
10. How often do you use subscriptions to customizable "news alerts" from Web sites to keep up on the latest news?
11. How often do you use the Web to **IDENTIFY** issues pertinent to your organization/clients?
12. How often do you use the Web to **MANAGE** those issues for your organization/clients?



13. How often do you use the Web to research public opinion by monitoring online communities (news groups, bulletin boards, etc.)

14. How often do you use the Web for two-way communication with your publics?

15. How often do you use the Web to target publics?

16. How often do you communicate with your publics by placing messages in appropriate interactive forums (bulletin boards, news groups, chat rooms, etc.)

17. How often do you attempt to place news stories on the Web?

### **Part III: Role of the Web in Public Relations**

The following questions will measure your beliefs about the use of the World Wide Web in public relations. [1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree] (Note: Email use is NOT considered part of World Wide Web use):

1. The World Wide Web is now a standard public relations tactic.

2. My organization has improved its use of the World Wide Web by purchasing firms that specialize in the Web:

3. My organization has improved its use of the Web by hiring outside consultants that specialize in the Web.

4. The fact that our Internet connection is "always on" has changed my practice of public relations significantly.

5. I have used the World Wide Web to keep up with breaking news while working in other applications at my computer.

6. The Web has reduced costs for my organization.

7. The Web has reduced my reliance on other forms of research (focus groups, phone surveys, library research, etc.)

8. I have no memory of public relations practice without the Internet.

9. I am concerned the Web reduces personal interaction.
10. The Web generates additional revenue for my organization.
11. The Web has reduced the time I have to analyze information before responding.
12. IT or IS departments no longer control the Web presence for my organization.
13. The Web eliminates intermediaries, making it easier for me to reach my publics.
14. The Web is useful in handling crisis situations.
15. Please rank order the following uses of the World Wide Web from (1) most important to (4) least important to you and your organization. Please place a zero (0) next to the uses that do not apply to you or your organization:  
Research  
Communication  
Issues management  
Evaluation

#### **Part IV: Roles**

The following questions will attempt to determine the role(s) you serve in your (client's) organization. [At no time = 1, 2 = less than once per month, 3 = a few times a month, 4 = a few times a week, 5 = all the time]:

1. How often do you provide information **informally** to outsiders that will induce them to act favorably to your organization/clients?
2. How often do you provide information **informally** to groups outside your (client's) organization to create a favorable image?
3. How often do you provide information on a **formal** basis to groups outside your (client's) organization intended to create a favorable image?

4. How often do you provide information **formally** to outsiders that will induce them to act favorably to your (client's) organization?
5. How often do you represent your organization/clients at events and meetings?
6. How often do you take responsibility for success?
7. How often do you take responsibility for failure?
8. How often do you keep management/clients actively involved in public relations?
9. How often do you keep others in the (client's) organization informed about public relations matters?
10. How often do you operate as a catalyst for the involvement of non public relations personnel in public relations matters?
11. How often do you decide **WHEN** to transmit information acquired from outside your (client's) organization to others within your (client's) organization?
12. How often do you decide **WHAT** portions of information acquired from outside your (client's) organization to transmit to others within your (client's) organization?
13. How often do you decide **TO WHOM** within your (client's) organization to send information obtained from outside sources?
14. How often do you **informally** instruct others, not in PR, how to interact with people outside your (client's) organization?
15. How often do you **formally** instruct others, not in PR, how to interact with people outside your (client's) organization?
16. How often do you work with managers to increase their communication skills?
17. How often do you collaborate with non-public relations people to define and solve problems?

18. How often do you plan and recommend courses of action?
19. How often do you make communication policy decisions?
20. How often do you keep management/clients informed of public reactions?
21. How often do you produce pamphlets and brochures?
22. How often do you edit/rewrite communications for/from your organization/clients for grammar and spelling?
23. How often do you write public relations materials?
24. How often do you produce photography and graphics for your organization/clients?
25. How often do you conduct communication audits?
26. How often do you report public opinion survey results?
27. How often do you **FORMALLY** acquire information from sources or groups external to your organization/clients?
28. How often do you **INFORMALLY** acquire information from sources or groups external to your organization/clients?
29. Which of the following best describes your present affiliation in public relations?:
  - Agency
  - Sole practitioner
  - Corporate
  - Not-for-profit
  - Government
  - Education
  - Other

## **Part V: Power**

The following questions measure your power in your organization.

1. How many people are employed full time in your organization?
2. How many full time employees (not counting board members) in your organization have higher titles than you?

3. What benefits does your compensation entail? Please check all that apply:

- annual salary
- stock options
- health coverage
- company car
- life insurance
- disability insurance
- expense account
- bonuses
- Other

4. How many titles do you currently have?

Please type your title(s) here.

5. The Web has empowered me to be promoted into my current position. [1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly Agree]

6. What percentage of shares in your company do you and your family own?

- None
- Less than 1%
- 1 to 10%
- 11 to 20%
- 21 to 30%
- 31 to 40%
- 41 to 50%
- 51 to 60%
- 61 to 70%
- 71 to 80%
- 81 to 90%
- 91 to 100%
- Not applicable

7. Are you related by marriage or kinship to the ownership of your organization?

- Yes
- No

8. Are you the founder or owner of your organization? Yes No

9. (If yes,) The Web has empowered me to own my own company. [1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly Agree]

10. In how many different functional areas have you worked?  
(Please specify number and then check all that apply)

Marketing

Finance

Legal

Public relations

Research

Strategic Planning

Other-Please specify

11. How many different positions have you held in your firm?  
(Please specify number and then check all that apply)

Marketing

Finance

Legal

Public relations

Research

Strategic Planning

Other-Please specify

12. How many levels of clearance beyond you are required to  
approve communication materials you produce?

13. How many professional designations (APR, ABC, etc.) do  
you hold?

14. My informational use of the Web has empowered me as an  
expert in my organization.

15. On how many corporate boards do you serve?

16. On how many nonprofit boards do you serve?

17. The World Wide Web has enhanced my prestige as a  
practitioner. [1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 =  
neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly Agree]

## **Part VI**

Please tell us about yourself and your position:

1. What is your gender?

Male

Female

2. Age:

3. Current level of education:

Bachelors Degree  
Masters Degree  
Doctoral Degree  
Other

4. Please indicate the category that best describes your ethnic background:

Caucasian  
African-American  
Asian-American  
Native-American  
Hispanic  
Other <>

5. Please indicate how long you have been practicing public relations (in years):

6. What was your undergraduate college major?

7. If you completed any graduate work, what was your area of study?

8. What college(s) did you attend?

9. Please indicate your personal income from public relations:     \$

10. Do you wish to receive an email copy of the executive summary of my research once the study is complete?

Yes  
No

## Appendix VI

### Sample Screen Shot of Survey

Use of the World Wide Web in public Relations: A Practitioners Survey - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Forward Stop Home Search Favorites Media Print Mail News Finance Shopping

Customize Search Bookmarks My Yahoo! Yahoo! Yahoo! Mail Finance News Shopping

page 1 of 11

### Part I: Internet Use

The following questions measure your use of new technologies in your practice of public relations.

1. Of the following tools, which do you use to access the Internet?  
(Check all that apply).
  - ☐ Email
  - ☐ World Wide Web
  - ☐ Wireless Internet Device (Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), cell phone, etc.)
2. How many hours per week do you use email in your practice of public relations?
  - ☐ 0 hours per week
  - ☐ 5 hours or less
  - ☐ 6-10 hours per week
  - ☐ 11-20 hours per week
  - ☐ 21-30 hours per week
  - ☐ 31-40 hours per week
  - ☐ 40+ hours per week
3. How many hours per week do you use the World Wide Web in your practice of public relations?
  - ☐ 0 hours per week
  - ☐ 5 hours or less
  - ☐ 6-10 hours per week
  - ☐ 11-20 hours per week

Internet