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The Role and Effectiveness of Public Relations in an Intergrated Marketing Communications Program

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**THE ROLE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN
AN INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM**

by
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Nature of Thesis

Today's world-leading companies such as Pfizer, IBM and McDonalds are using public relations to add power and persuasion to all of their marketing messages. Even more importantly, these companies are using consistent messages throughout their communications programs – marketing, advertising and public relations.

According to Thomas Harris, author of Value-Added Public Relations: The Secret Weapon of Integrated Marketing, information, rather than salesmanship, builds credibility with sophisticated and skeptical consumers (1995, p. 8). Public Relations can effectively reach targets where other marketing communications tools fall short. Public relations affects the bottom line and without it, companies and organizations are unable to communicate more effectively to their target audiences.

This thesis project will explore the role of public relations in an integrated marketing communications program. The nature of this thesis shall focus on the following objectives:

- Explore how and why public relations plays an essential role in integrated marketing
- Present the many ways public relations can add value to an integrated marketing communications program
- Discuss how the United Way of America used integrated marketing communications to launch its re-branding efforts

Reason for Topic

In his book, Harris (1995) looks at how and why public relations plays a critical role in integrated marketing communications and explains the many ways PR can add value to an integrated marketing communications program.

Mr. Harris is an industry-leading expert in marketing public relations. He is also a management consultant specializing in marketing and public relations, as well as an adjunct professor at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism and past president of Golin/Harris Communications.

The concept of integrated marketing communications was, and still is, intriguing. Why?

- Integrated marketing communications is relatively new and is not widely practiced.

- Public relations is no longer in competition with marketing or advertising but touted as the most valued tool in comparison to advertising and marketing.
- In order for an integrated marketing communications program to be successful, it must be strategically executed with consistent messages interweaved through all marketing, advertising and public relations communications materials.

Research Questions

Following are questions that hopefully will be answered throughout this thesis:

- Does integrated marketing communications produce success?
- Is public relations truly “the secret weapon” as compared with advertising and marketing when looking at the overall effectiveness of an integrated marketing communications program?
- How does one go about measuring the value of public relations?

Subsidiary Questions

In an effort to address the impact of public relations in an integrated marketing communications program, this thesis will also explore the following questions:

- Does integrated marketing communications deliver a clear consistent message that is more efficient and more effective?
- Does integrated marketing cut through the increasingly cluttered commercial landscape?
- Does it foster a two-way dialogue between consumers and companies?
- Does integrated marketing communications lead to long-term consumer-to-brand relationships?

Definition of Terms

Integrated marketing communications:

the process of combining a variety of functions that may include public relations, sales promotion, direct response, database marketing, advertising or direct marketing into a program that has clarity, consistency and maximum impact (Harris 1995, p. 5)

Public relations:

A form of communication primarily directed toward gaining public understanding and acceptance. Public relations usually deals with issues rather than products or services, and is used to build goodwill with public or employees. Examples of public relations are employee training, support of charitable events, or a news release about some positive community participation. (Harris 1995, p. 7)

Marketing:

The process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods, services, organizations and events to create and maintain relationships that will satisfy individual and organizational objectives (Boone and Kurtz 1998, p. 28)

Advertising:

The conveyance of persuasive information, frequently by paid announcement and other notices, about products, services or ideas (Alexander and Tate 1999, p. 32)

Positioning:

The attempt to control the public's perception of a product or service as it relates to competitive products (Gielgun 1998, p. 232)

Measuring Outputs:

The amount of exposure in the media, the number of placements and audience impressions, and the likelihood of having reached specific target audiences (Seitel 1995, p. 251)

Measuring Outgrowth:

The measurement of reception - whether or not a target audience actually received the messages directed at them, and whether they paid attention to, understood, and retained those messages (Seitel 1995, p. 251)

Measuring Outcomes:

The measurement of attitude and behavioral change, i.e., whether anyone changed his or her mind or went out and did something as a result of what was said or done through public relations (Seitel 1995, p. 252)

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background of Integrated Marketing Communications

Integrated marketing communications became a marketing concept of the 1990s (Harris, p. 55). Many experts have claimed that integrated marketing communications will be the marketing practice necessary for survival in the 21st century (1995, p. 59).

Some marketers, who have been practicing media advertising as the solution to all marketing problems, were taking a fresh look at all the components of marketing and specifically considering the unique dimension that public relations brings to the marketing mix. Public relations practitioners are seizing the opportunity that integration has to offer to make a difference where it counts most - the bottom line of the companies' financial success.

Integration marketing communications is the culmination of the shift that began in the post-World War II period, from selling what we make to making what consumers want (1995, pg 66). This type of communications focuses on what the customers want to know about products and services, not what marketers want to tell them in order to sell them (1995, pg. 57).

Integrated marketing communications is not a new concept. Many professionals working in public relations and marketing have claimed that marketers are wasting too much time and money on advertising, public relations and promotion programs that are poorly coordinated (Henry, 1995). They further attest that the methods used separately were counterproductive and causing consumers too much confusion.

When buying products, customers want reliable information before making a purchase. That information must come from a credible source. Public relations enables that to happen. Harvard marketing expert Theodore Levitt, author of the classic Marketing Myopia and father of global marketing labels public relations the “credible source,” pointing out that when the message is delivered by an objective third party, such as a journalist or broadcaster, the message is delivered more persuasively. (Harris, 1995)

Why Integrated Marketing Communications

There are some companies that only have a public relations department and others merely an advertising component. Marketing competes against advertising and vice versa. Each claims that their efforts truly affect the bottom line of a company’s financial success. Public relations was thought of a money waster and even worst, the bottom of the totem pole. So why hasn’t

integrated marketing communications caught on completely in the 21st Century?

The initial reason was because the concept was relatively new or that many supervisors did not take the time to read the latest industry practices to even know what the concept is. According to Rayna Skolnik (Skolnik), a New York City freelancer who reports on business and financial subjects and is the author of *integrated marketing*, integrated marketing is hardly a new idea. Executives have been talking about its advantages for years, but few took the trouble to practice it (2004).

Skolnik goes on to say that recent changes in the marketplace mean that companies that hope to survive must give integrated marketing communications more practice than lip service (2004). Why? Today's customers have more, better and faster access to information than ever. Bombarded by competing messages, they can rapidly sift through the information overload to find what they need, and they are better equipped than ever to distinguish false marketing claims from substantive ones. Marketing integration provides companies with a competitive edge by focusing all of the sales, marketing and operations resources on promoting the same message throughout the customer and prospect base and doing everything possible to make sure that sales and marketing promises get consistently delivered (2004).

Marketing integration not only increases the chances that your organization's message will break through the clutter, but also that your customers' expectations will be consistently met. Integrated strategies not only ensure that your message will have more impact; they can do so with greater cost efficiency than old-fashioned strategies (2004).

Information Processing and Integrated Marketing Communications

Most consumers take in, process and store marketing communications information in a horizontal fashion. (Schultz et al 1993) They accept information from a wide variety of sources across many media and in many forms and formats. Consumers use the same information-processing approach whether the new data comes from advertising, sales promotion, a salesperson, or an article or story in a newspaper or magazine. Thus marketers' products and services are subjected to the same judgmental approach of testing against retained concepts and categories no matter what the source of information. If we understand this horizontal approach, four issues appear to be critical for the future: information control, information processing, information overload and relationship marketing. (1993)

Information control

Today, marketers have a fair amount of control over what customers and prospects hear or learn about their products. They control this flow of information through paid and non-paid media placements. As the information explosion continues and the availability and ease of access to data expand, consumers will have more opportunities to gather information about marketers' products and services (1993). Information may come from a wide variety of outside sources. For example, it may come from non-biased sources such as Consumer Reports or underwriters Laboratories or from competitively placed stories, articles, and activities which consumers may access through Lexis/Nexis. Consumers may also get information from other database sources or simply from the increasing variety of media available to them. In fact, the most likely scenario is that the consumer of the late 1990s will access information upon demand or need rather than through current system of marketer-directed and marketer-controlled message distribution systems (1993). Whichever occur, it becomes obvious that if the marketer hopes to influence the consumer of the '90s, there must be a clear, consistent message on behalf of the product or service no matter what the source or system. Conflicting messages, delivered through a variety of sources, simply cannot and likely will not be processed by the consumer (1993).

Information Processing

From what we now know about information processing, the critical process determining whether a person will use marketing communications information depends almost entirely on the ways consumers test new product or service information against their existing stored concepts, categories, and networks (1993). These areas obviously can be expanded and enhanced over time. However, the marketer who presents non-integrated messages risks not having any of his or her messages processed because of the conflict that occurs in the consumer's information processing system. If for no other reason than risk of confusion, marketers must integrate their messages or consumers will simply ignore them (1993).

Information Overload

As we move more and more from verbal-based to visual-based communications systems, consumers' information processing systems will continue to change and evolve. There will be more "sound-bite" learning. There will be less information stored about individual products and services as the marketplace expands. Consumer won't have the time or the storage capacity to learn a great deal about a product or service except perhaps from personal experience (1993). Thus, with incredible amounts of stimulation,

limited processing capacity, and more concepts and categories to process and store, the consumer may move to broader categories for products and services. With this process will come less opportunity for products and services to be differentiated. Thus, the message that marketing organizations deliver must be clear, concise, and persuasive. That demands the integration of all forms of marketing communications activities – public relations, advertising, marketing, promotions, and sales.

Relationship Marketing

As marketers and customers learn more about each other through various forms of two-way communications system, the integration of marketing communications will become natural. In the coming age of one-on-one or relationship marketing, communications will become the critical ingredient in building and maintaining relationships. If marketer and customer do not communicate in both directions, the relationship will fail and the customer will drift away.

The Integrated Marketing Communications Planning Model

The basis for an effective integrated marketing communications program is based on the planning model illustrated in Appendix B.

As illustrated in the model, the company/organization would start with a database of information on both customers and prospects. While the database should be as complete as possible, many companies/organizations, particularly those that market through retail channels, often have only limited information about their actual customers. This is especially true of large, high-penetration, fast-moving consumer products. Yet this type of information is critical to the future success of an integrated marketing communications program (1993).

The planning model that is illustrated is idealized, that is, it represents the best of all worlds. Few organizations have reached this point as yet in database development. There are some, however, who have been gathering data about their users for several years. United Way, for example, have a database of its donors, organized by the amount they contributed to this organization's campaign, background and likes of the donors with personal information (address, age, race, etc.).

As shown on the model, the database should contain at a minimum such hard data as demographics, psychographics, and purchase history. In addition, attitudinal information such as the customer's category network and how

consumers associate the products they use is vital for a solid integrated marketing communications approach (1993).

A major difference between the new integrated marketing communications planning approach and most traditional marketing communications planning programs is that the new focus is on the consumer, customer or prospect, not on the organization's sales or profit goals. The customer and prospect base determine how successful an organization can be, and how skilled the marketer is not how many resources he or she has at hand. The customer base really determines the amount of product that can be sold. To a certain extent it also defines the level of profit that might be attainable (1993).

A second major way in which our integrated marketing communications planning process differs from traditional methods is that we use customer and prospect behavior whenever possible as the first segmentation approach. The behavior of a customer indicates what a person will do in the future than does various intention or attitudinal approaches. The understanding of the customer can come from using behavioral data such as that captured through scanners, consumer research or other sources (1993).

The next step is called contact management. Contact management is based on the idea that finding a time, a place, or a situation in which the customer/prospect can be communicated with may be one of the most important tasks of the 1990s. The contact arrangement will determine what

will be communicated about the product or service. The conditions under which the communications will be delivered are as or more critical than determining the message content of the communications (1993). For example, if a marketer determines that the best time to deliver a sales message is at a sponsored tennis match, then the message and tone of what the marketer communicates are greatly influenced by the setting.

The next step is to develop a communications strategy. This involves the message that is to be delivered given the context in which it will appear. (1993). This is when the objective or objectives are stated and what response is expected from the person contacted. Based on the communication objectives, we then define the specific marketing objectives for the integrated marketing communications plan.

Once the marketing objectives have been set, the next step is to determine which of the marketing tools should be used to achieve the marketing objectives. The key is to select the tool that will achieve the communications objective.

The last step in the process is to select the various marketing communications tactics that will help achieve the communications goals set forth in the earlier part of the planning process. Here, the communications techniques can be as broad as the imagination of the marketing communications planner.

The need for credibility

The importance of the credibility factor is underscored by a survey of marketing directors and brand managers surveyed in 1994 by Golin/Harris Communications. Two-thirds of the respondents said that they believed that public relations is as important or more important than advertising in building brand awareness. But four-fifths of them believed that public relations is more important than advertising in building brand credibility. (Harris 1995)

Rich Jernstedt, Golin/Harris CEO, said that “the increasing fragmentation of traditional mass media, the rising cost of advertising, and growing consumer sophistication have made public relations a key part of the marketing mix.” (1995, p. 55)

The credibility of public relations is needed to reach today’s increasingly skeptical consumers because they are finding advertising messages less credible. Seven out of ten respondents of a recent survey conducted by Video Storyboard Tests said they believe few, if any, of the ads they see on TV or in print. (Schultz 1994)

According to the Roper Organization, “Most demographic groups share a suspicion of marketers, and the skepticism is strongest among the most desirable customers.” (1994, p. 252)

The situation is especially acute among the consumers of the future. A 1994 study of high school students in 26 countries conducted by DDB Needham found more than half agreed with the statement “most advertising can’t be believed.” (1994, p.253)

In the 1991 book, The Marketer’s Guide to Public Relations, written by Philip Kotler of Northwestern’s Kellogg School of Management, of the world’s foremost marketing authorities, offers the following explanation for the increasing importance of public relations in marketing:

In an over communicated society, consumers develop communications-avoidance routines. They don’t notice print ads; they ‘tune out’ commercial messages. Message senders are finding it increasingly difficult to reach the minds and hearts of target customers. As mass advertising and even target advertising loses some of their cost-effectiveness, message senders are driven to other media. They discover, or rediscover, the power of news, events, community programs, atmospheres, and other powerful communications modalities. Sooner or later they discover marketing public relations (Schultz et al 1993, p. 84-85).

Don E. Schultz, Stanley Tannenbaum, and Robert R. Lauterborn, authors of Integrated Marketing Communications, state that “you cannot depend on the product alone to build consumer confidence. It’s the rapport, the empathy, the dialogue, the relationship, the communications you establish with the consumer that makes the difference. They separate you from the pack.” (1993, pg. 85)

In 1996, *Advertising Age* reported that marketers were seeking to create a brand experience with customers on a personal level by “mixing up a cocktail of paid advertising, public relations, sampling, direct marketing, and more. The aim: to bring customers not just an awareness of a brand but an actual –or- virtual-experience of it.” *Advertising Age* labeled this hybrid of established disciplines “the PR experience.” (Pollack 1996, pg. 3)

Other mainstream media are acknowledging the increasing use of public relations in marketing. A 1997 front-page *Wall Street Journal* story quoted Thomas Harris on the value of third-party endorsement and reported that old-fashioned public relations “that is practically free can be more valuable than paid commercials.” The new media recognition of marketing could be seen in a CNN segment on “The World Today.” The lead was “consider it a law of human nature. Get their attention and you may get their business as well.” The story pointed out that “the explosion of media outlets has led to a PR explosion.” (Harris 1995, p. 15)

Public Relations Provides the Glue

Prominent public relations counselor Robert Dilenschneider, editor of Dartnells's Public Relations Handbook, cites four reasons why marketers are increasing turning to public relations to promote products and services and why public relations is the “glue that holds the whole thing together.” (Harris, 1995, p. 15) They are:

1. **Need to reduce costs.** Global competition has put pricing pressure on American business. This means that costs have to be cut. Marketing departments were motivated to search for less-expensive ways to get results.
2. **Fragmentation of the media.** The mass market has been replaced by marketing niches. To reach as many people now as they did in the 1950s and 1960s, marketers have to use a variety of tools.
3. **Clutter of commercial messages.** The challenge to break through the clutter and have your message noticed has left the door wide open for creative public relations.

4. **Increased competition.** Public relations can get consumers to your company and not your competition by paving the way for the introduction, consumption, or repositioning of a product or service.

(Harris 1995)

According to Susan Henderson, Director of Marketing Relations at Miller Brewing Company, she says:

As the marketplace for products becomes more competitive, more cluttered, more fragmented, and more expensive to compete in, companies are demanding that their marketing departments make the most of all their resource. With the ability to build goodwill through credible third-party sources, raise consumer awareness, educate key audience, and directly involve audiences with a company's product, public relations can give a marketer an extra edge in achieving objectives. Marketing public relations can leverage marketing investments, making advertising and promotion dollars work harder. It can help build trademark and brand equities with consumers. It can help a company define its place in the marketplace and strategically position the company with key audiences. Finally, it can help facilitate communications with and gain acceptance for a company's marketing strategy from customers who sell your products to the end customers (Henderson 1996, p. 86).

Measuring the effectiveness of Public Relations

In order to determine the success of public relations, there has to be ways of measuring its effectiveness. Public relations practitioners have used the following tactical elements to measure whether public relations was a successful element. According to Harris, measurement is organized by measuring outputs, measuring outgrowths and measuring outcomes.

Measuring Outputs is the amount of exposure in the media, the number of placements and audience impressions, and the likelihood of having reached specific target audiences. (Harris 1995) Outputs can be measured by the following:

- Circulation/audience
- Impressions
- Target media reach
- Target audience reach
- Delivery of message points
- Qualitative analysis
- Advertising equivalency
- Competitive analysis

Measuring outgrowth is the measurement of reception. That is whether or not a target audience actually received the messages directed at them, and whether they paid attention to, understood, and retained those messages. (Harris 1995, p. 35) Some commonly used ways to measure outgrowths are

- Focus groups
- Day-after recall
- Mall intercepts
- Write-fors
- Call-ins
- Contest entries

- Event participation

Lastly is the method of measuring outcomes. Measuring outcomes is the measurement of attitude and behavioral change, i.e., whether anyone changed his or her mind or went out and did something as a result of what was said or done through public relations. The most advanced level of public relations effectiveness research measures outcomes. This measures opinion, attitude, and behavioral change. (1995, pg. 25) The following are techniques used to measure outcomes:

- Before and after polls (pretests and posttests)
- Experimental and quasi-experimental research designs
- Data collection methods such as observation, participation, and role-playing
- Comprehensive, multifaceted communications audits
- Advanced data analysis such as psychographic analysis, factor and cluster analysis, and perceptual mapping

CHAPTER III

DATA COLLECTION & METHODOLOGY

Why United Way of America Was Selected

Before the research methodology for this thesis is explained, it is important to share background information about United Way of America's re-branding efforts – why they decided to make a change and the result of that change.

In May of 2003, Cynthia Round, United Way of America's vice president of marketing, felt the systems or local chapters were causing a fragmentation in the brand. Originally, the local chapters were given carte blanche on how they communicated programs and displayed logos. Operating under the auspices and name of United Way, the chapters were also given the freedom to create their own logos and communicate different key messages. As a result, many of the volunteers and potential supporters did not quite understand the mission of United Way, thus causing a drop in participation and donations. Donations were going down by 3-5% annually for the last three years.

With a considerable amount of experience as a public relations professional in the corporate environment (Philips Electronics, Sony and Procter & Gamble), Ms. Round knew that something had to be done to re-establish United Way's brand leadership in the not-for-profit arena before it lost credibility among its current donors and potential donors.

Therefore, in August of 2003, she hired the Brand Agency, a company that analyzes brands, offers assessment on whether a brand is achieving its purpose or merely not making a presence at all, and recreates the brand as necessary.

After three months of extensive research, the Branding Agency concluded the following:

- The visual components of the United Way's symbol have become icons for the category and are highly diluted
- Only 13% of local United Ways audited are using the current logo in line with graphic standards
- Local United Ways often emphasize the United Way's name—the most “ownable” part of the identity

- Local United Ways often elevate geographic qualifiers in a host of different ways
- Overall, inconsistent use of the United Way logo's is fragmenting the identity and potentially weakening United Way's impact
- Each organization's messages were not consistently communicated throughout its collateral materials
- Each organization, even though located in different states but launching the same programs, were inconsistently communicating the mission

In order to reinstate United Way's reputation and branding leadership, which is worth \$3 billion and is the third most recognizable brand in the world, the Branding Agency advised that each system utilizes integrated marketing communications in its collateral materials and uses the same logo. Based on the recommendations from the Branding Agency, the United Way of America board of directors instructed that the Branding Agency recreate a new logo and develop marketing materials with consistent messaging that would be distributed to the local chapters but localized for each system. Each system

was therefore mandated to implement the changes by 2005 or forego its membership from the United Way of America.

Research Methodology

In addition to gathering primary research from literature focused on integrated marketing communications and on-line articles, a survey was developed and distributed to United Way's marketing professionals.

Having worked for this organization and participated in the branding process, the author knew that selecting United Way of America as an organization to research would be ideal for several reasons:

- Familiarity with the United Way's system and many of its employees, especially the marketing professionals
- Participation in the re-branding launch
- Knowledge of this organization and its re-branding effort

Having previously met and talked with many of the marketing directors, the author knew that many of the directors came from different backgrounds. Some had practiced integrated marketing communications and some had either worked in public relations, advertising and promotions previous to joining United Way. There were even some professionals who had not come from a marketing background. This group had stepped into the position and

therefore, had to get up to speed by reading and learning as they worked. The author felt that this group would pose a challenge as they were not familiar with integrated marketing; however, their inexperience could provide a fresh perspective and perhaps an unbiased point of view as they were learning more about this style of communications by attending United Way's marketing seminars and participating in the re-branding efforts.

The next step was to decide which marketing directors to approach as there are over 2,000 professionals in this position. Therefore, the author chose to survey the marketing directors from metro twos so that a fair comparison could be obtained. Metro twos United Ways were selected because the author of this thesis worked in a metro two United Way and the author is highly familiar with the structure.

There are four levels within United Way – metros one, two, three and four. The levels are based on the amount of money raised and the number of staff members. Following is a breakdown of the different metros and how they are classified.

- Metro One – \$10 million or more raised annually; 100+ employees with a communications department of seven members

- Metro Two – \$3-4 million raised annually; 30 – 50 employees with a communications department of five members
- Metro Three – \$1-2 million raised; ten-15 employees with a communications department of two to three
- Metro Four – \$300,00 – 500,000 raised; four employees with no communications department; the United Way has a freelancer or the president might serve as the communications director

The survey was developed to answer the following questions:

- 1) Is public relations more effective and important than advertising and marketing in an integrated marketing communications program?
- 2) Does integrated marketing communications sound as if it can be very effective and aid in the success of an organization's communications strategy?
- 3) What measurement strategies are employed to show the success of a communications program?

A total of 17 questions were drafted, utilizing the service of Zoomerang. Zoomerang is an online survey company that sets up surveys and sends via online to respondents. Since the author had a list of marketing

professionals with e-mail addresses, Zoomerang sent out the survey to this group. The survey was accompanied by a cover letter, in Appendix A. The content of the cover letter included the following:

- a definition of integrated marketing communications
- the purpose of the correspondence (gathering research for the completion of a thesis)
- the promise that responses would be confidential
- the offer of sending the results of the survey upon request, providing the author's contact information.

The survey, which is in Appendix B, was administered online and sent to 50 marketing directors from metro twos United Way.

A deadline was given, which over half of the respondents did not adhere to. However, all 50 of the respondents sent back their completed surveys and did not request a copy of the survey results.

CHAPTER IV

SURVEY ANALYSIS

The author sent out 50 surveys with a total of 17 questions to marketing professionals working in metro two United Ways. All of the respondents returned a completed survey.

The respondents were from a varied work experience and include both sexes. There were 15 males and 35 females who participated in the survey with a variety of public relations experience. The majority of the respondents, 65%, had 15 years or more experience, 20% had four to six years of experience, followed by 10% of the respondents having seven-12 years of experience. Only 5% of the respondents had less than three years of experience.

All of the respondents were college graduates. An overwhelming amount (90%) of the respondents had finished college, with 10% completing graduate school. Because the majority of the respondents has a great deal of education and work experience, the author felt that the respondents had a strong amount of credibility.

When 100% of the respondents agreed that integrated marketing communications sounded as if it can be very effective and aid in the success of an organization's communications strategy, the author was somewhat surprised as she thought there would be a mixture of answers. However, it was

encouraging to know that integrated marketing communications is an important device used. As discussed in chapter I of this thesis, integrated marketing communications became a marketing concept of the 1990s (Harris 1995, p. 59). Harris claimed that integrated marketing communications will be the marketing practice necessary for survival in the 21st century (Harris 1995, p. 59). That might be the case according to the majority of the responses.

It is also important to note that all of the respondents used an integrated marketing approach in their communications strategy. This suggested that many of the respondents understood what integrated marketing communications was thereby lending strong authenticity to the respondents' experience in this industry. It was obvious that the respondents understood the survey based on their feedback and therefore, allowed the author to believe that the answers could be trusted. In many cases, when respondents answer surveys, they usually have questions if the terminology is not clear. That was not the case in this situation.

When asked if public relations is the most important component for success in an integrated marketing communications program, 50% strongly agree, only 20% agree and 30% remain neutral. Even though the author expected a variety of responses, it was surprising to learn that 30% decided to remain neutral, which led the author to believe that this group of respondents

felt that either public relations did not play a success in their integrated marketing communications program or was not the only element in the success of an integrated marketing communications program.

The next section of the survey allowed the author to find out what other communications strategy was employed by the respondents. Therefore, the author asked the respondents to rank the practices (public relations, marketing, advertising, direct marketing/mail and database marketing) using a 1-5 scale (with 5 being the most important and 1, the least important in order of importance) in an integrated marketing communications program.

Even though half thought public relations was an important component in an integrated communication marketing program, only twenty percent ranked public relations as more important than marketing, advertising, direct marketing/mail and database marketing. Direct Marketing/Mail out ranked public relations by 15%. Thirty-five percents of the respondents thought direct marketing/mail was more important than public relations. Thirty-five percent ranked marketing as the most important element and only ten percent thought database marketing was most important. What was surprising was that no one thought advertising was the most important element, even when these marketing professionals have to dedicate almost 40% of their budget to advertising. The author though public relations would be ranked higher as a great deal of public relations requires media outreach. Based on past research

discussed in this thesis, past surveys have shown that there is a need for the importance of the credibility factor. The author thought that the answers on this survey would mirrored the 1994 survey conducted by Golin/Harris where marketing directors and brand managers thought public relations was the most important communications strategies. The Golin/Harris survey revealed that two-thirds of the respondents said that they believed that public relations is as important as or more important than advertising in building brand awareness. But four-fifths of them believed that publications are more important than advertising in building brand credibility (1995). However, that was not the case.

The author thinks the variety of answers could have been the result of previous experience of the respondents. Many of the respondents did not come from a public relations background. Backgrounds were varied. Many of the professionals came from different industries; some worked in corporate where they had a large budget and used various communications vehicles – advertising, promotions, etc. Therefore that could be the reasons why public relations did not rank as high as advertising, marketing and database marketing.

What was really interesting was that the marketing professionals that had practiced public relations for four years ranked public relations higher than the other strategies. Additionally, only this group had graduate schools. This led the author to believe that many of the curricula in graduate schools are touting the importance of combining all communications efforts and therefore are more effective than just using one or two strategies.

The next set of questions basically asked the respondents if they thought public relations could be more effective than advertising and marketing. However, the questions went on to state that public relations relies on the credibility of a third party source whereas advertising and marketing are the voice of the seller.

Approximately 90% strongly agreed or agreed that public relations is more effective than advertising and only 10 percent disagreed. Additionally, 70% strongly agreed or agreed that public relations was more effective than marketing; whereas, 30% disagreed. The author felt the responses were more in favor of public relations because of how the question was phrased. These two sets of questions implied that public relations provides credibility of a third voice; whereas, advertising and marketing are basically the seller's voice.

The last set of questions investigated the measuring methods used by the respondents. Many of the methods were listed as methods used by the author when she worked at United Way. This section was another opportunity to find out if any additional methods of measurement were used as public relations is very difficult to measure when showing colleagues and the board of directors the success of public relations. Currently, this profession is still trying to show its worth as compared with marketing and advertising. Advertising and Marketing still receive the largest amount of funding as compared with public relations. In other words even though public relations plays an important role, it still has a long ways to go in terms of establishing its importance and worth. Measuring the success of a public relations program still needs to be done to show the value of public relations and how this is important to an organization's achieving its overall image.

Therefore, the author did not find the responses surprising or that all of the respondents set up methods of measuring the effectiveness of public relations. Every year, the United Way's marketing professional must present an annual presentation to the board of directors to show the effectiveness of the marketing campaign. This presentation is the opportunity to show how effective integrated marketing communications, especially public relations, and to ask for a request in funding.

All of the respondents used all of the following as a way of measuring the effectiveness of public relations:

- the number of newspaper clippings or broadcast airings of the organization or product
- the content of the news articles or broadcast, especially if the organization's key messages are mentioned
- an increased traffic or visitors to the organization's Web site
- an increased number of contributions
- an increased number of attendees at an organization's events

There was no other methodology that was mentioned.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

When developing the survey, the author really did not know what type of responses she would received. The only goal was to gather data and learn how the respondents felt about public relations in an integrated marketing communications program. However, upon tabulating the responses, the author was surprised at some of the answers, as well as found the results interesting.

First, the author thought the demographics of the respondents were well varied in terms of educational background, years of experience and job titles. Even though the respondents were in upper management, they had different titles but pretty much the same responsibilities. The author knew that the responsibilities were the same based on her experience at United Way and participation in marketing conferences. Titles of the respondents ranged from marketing directors, vice president of community relations to public relations directors and communication directors.

The author felt that due to the respondents' experience and education, the questions would be answered without problems, plus the author knew that the credibility of the respondents could be trusted. This was due to the fact that the majority of the respondents had worked in the communication industry for 15 years or more so the experience and knowledge were rather strong. Only 5% of the respondents had less than three years of experience;

20% have 4-6 years of experience and 10%, 7-12 years of experience. And 90% had attended college while 10% had attended graduate school.

Additionally, over half of the respondents dedicated 60% of their time to public relations. Even though 40% did not dedicate their time to public relations, it was okay because the author needed to get unbiased feedback. If everyone had dedicated their time to public relations, then the answers probably would have been similar.

It was encouraging to find out that 100% of the respondents thought that integrated marketing communications could be very effective and serve as an important element in the success of an organization's communication strategy. The author thought she would get a mixture of responses. This led the author to believe that many of the respondents were experiencing some positive changes in their annual campaigns since implementation, which was seven months from the date of implementation. What was not surprising was that all of the respondents were currently employing integrated marketing communications. Since United Way of America had mandated that all of the systems started using the same key messages and logo, the respondents really had very little choice.

It was interesting to learn that half of the respondents strongly agree that public relations is the most important component for success in an integrated marketing communications program. The author thought many would have

remained neutrals considering that many of the respondents had just started using integrated marketing communications. However, this could have been an extension of the respondents' experience previous to joining United Way.

What the author thought was how the respondents ranked the practices (public relations, marketing, advertising, direct marketing and database marketing) in order of importance. Even though half thought public relations was an important component in an integrated communication marketing program, only twenty percent ranked public relations as more important than marketing, advertising, direct marketing/mail and database marketing. Even direct Marketing/Mail out ranked public relations by 15% (35% thought direct marketing/mail was most important). Thirty-five percent ranked marketing as the most important element and only ten percent thought database marketing was most important. No one thought advertising was the most important element, even when the marketing professionals must dedicate almost 40% of their budget to advertising.

When asked if public relations could be more effective than advertising, forty-five percent strongly agree and fifty-five percent agree. Forty percent of the respondents thought that public relations was more effective than marketing. This response was unusual especially after the response to the ranking of strategies. Because there was not further elaboration supplied by the respondents, it's difficult to ascertain why the respondents thought public

relations was more important than marketing but did not think public relations was important when compared with marketing, direct marketing, advertising, promotions or database marketing.

The last portion of the survey focused on the methods used to measure the effectiveness of public relations. There is nothing unusual here to note here. All of the respondents agreed on the same methodology and did not offer any other methods. Again, methods of measurement included

- The number of newspaper clippings or broadcast airings of their organization's services and key messages
- Content of the news articles or broadcast, especially if key messages are mentioned
- An increased traffic of visitors to the organization's Web site
- An increased number of contributions
- An increased number of attendees to the organizations events
- An increased number of volunteers

The ability of public relations to identify issues that impact marketing, to handle crisis situations and counsel top management, can exert enormous influence on marketing success or failure. These functions are exclusively the province of public relations and argue for public relations leadership in the development of integrated communications including marketing communications and corporate strategy that encompasses integrated marketing.

Even though public relations is indicated as an important element, as noted in the author's primary and secondary research, there still needs to be more research conducted.

The author would recommend the following:

- Monitor of public relations and its benefits so that marketing professionals will be convinced that public relations does indeed plays a role, an important role in an integrated marketing communications program
- Revisit the marketing directors of United Way after a year of the re-branding launch to find out if their annual campaigns were successful and if integrated marketing communications was or was not a success
- Continue to develop concrete measuring methods to evaluate the success of public relations and its effectiveness as there are still questions in the minds of marketing professionals

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APPENDIX

A

COVER LETTER

Dear fellow United Way Marketing person:

Could you please complete the survey? I would really appreciate your time.

I am a graduate student at Seton Hall University working on my thesis, "The Role & Effectiveness of Public Relations in an Integrated Marketing Communications program." As a former Vice President of United Way of Dutchess County, I am seeking your assistance. Would you please complete this online survey? I need it by November 5th.

This survey is aimed at marketing professionals at Metro two United Ways. The main thrust of my thesis is on integrated marketing communications, which is defined as the process of combining a variety of functions that may include public relations, sales promotion, direct response, database marketing, advertising or direct marketing into a program that has clarity, consistency and maximum impact.

The survey consists of 13 short questions. I promise you that this survey will approximately take 15 minutes to complete. Your responses will remain confidential and be used only in the preparation of my thesis.

I will be happy to share my thesis with you upon completion and the results of the survey as I am reaching out to 50 United Way Marketing Directors respondents. If you are interested in receiving the results, please e-mail me at svjohnson56@hotmail.com or write to me. My address is below and if you have any questions, my phone number is also below for your use.

Again, in order for me to complete my thesis, I ask that you please complete by November 5, 2005.

I greatly appreciate your time and help.

Thanking you in advance.

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B

SURVEY

Part I

Advertising Age sees **Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)** as “the process of combining a variety of functions that may include advertising, sales promotion, direct response, database marketing, public relations or direct marketing into a program that has clarity, consistency and maximum impact (Harris, 1995, pg. 5)

For each of the following statements, please circle or bold the response that most closely reflects your experience.

SA = Strongly Agree **A** = Agree **N** = Neutral **D** = Disagree **SD** = Strongly Disagree

A.

1. Integrated marketing communications sounds as if it can be very effective and aids in the success of an organization’s communications strategy.

SA = Strongly Agree **A** = Agree **N** = Neutral **D** = Disagree **SD** = Strongly Disagree

2. Currently I do not use an integrated marketing approach in my communications strategy.

Yes OR No

3. In an Integrated Marketing Communications program, public relations is the most important component for success.

SA = Strongly Agree **A** = Agree **N** = Neutral **D** = Disagree **SD** = Strongly Disagree

4. Please rank, using 1-5 (with 5 being the most important and 1, the least important), the following practices in order of importance in an Integrated Marketing Communications program.

Advertising Age sees **Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)** as “the process of combining a variety of functions that may include advertising, sales promotion, direct response, database marketing, public relations or direct marketing into a program that has clarity, consistency and maximum impact (Harris, pg. 5)

Public Relations _____
Marketing _____
Advertising _____
Direct Marketing/Mail _____
Database Marketing _____

5. Public Relations can be more effective than *advertising* because public relations relies on the credibility of a third party source whereas advertising is the voice of the seller.

SA = Strongly Agree **A** = Agree **N** = Neutral **D** = Disagree **SD** = Strongly Disagree

6. Public Relations can be more effective than *marketing* because public relations relies on the credibility of a third party source whereas advertising is the voice of the seller.

SA = Strongly Agree **A** = Agree **N** = Neutral **D** = Disagree **SD** = Strongly Disagree

B.

7. I set up methods of measuring the effectiveness of public relations so that I can show the value of public relations and how this practice is important to my organization's achieving its overall image.

Yes Or No

Advertising Age sees **Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)** as “the process of combining a variety of functions that may include advertising, sales promotion, direct response, database marketing, public relations or direct marketing into a program that has clarity, consistency and maximum impact (Harris, pg. 5).

8. The following statements are methods of measuring the effectiveness of public relations:

a. The number of newspaper clippings or broadcast airings of my organization or product is an effective measurement of successful public relations.

SA = Strongly Agree **A** = Agree **N** = Neutral **D** = Disagree **SD** = Strongly Disagree

b. The content of the news articles or broadcast, especially if key messages that I created are mentioned, is an effective measurement of successful public relations.

SA = Strongly Agree **A** = Agree **N** = Neutral **D** = Disagree **SD** = Strongly Disagree

c. An increased traffic or visitors to my Website is an effective measurement of successful public relations.

SA = Strongly Agree **A** = Agree **N** = Neutral **D** = Disagree **SD** = Strongly Disagree

d. An increased number of contributions is an effective measurement of successful public relations.

SA = Strongly Agree **A** = Agree **N** = Neutral **D** = Disagree **SD** = Strongly Disagree

e. An increased number of attendees at my organization’s events is an effective measurement of successful public relation.

SA = Strongly Agree **A** = Agree **N** = Neutral **D** = Disagree **SD** = Strongly Disagree

9. If there are other methods of measurements that you employ, please share your answer below.

PART II – OPTIONAL INFORMATION

10. Job Title _____

11. Number of years in the industry

- a. 1-3 years
- b. 4-6 years
- c. 7-12 years
- d. 15 years or more

12. If you practice IMC, what percent do you dedicate to public relations?

- a. 10-20 %
- b. 30-40 %
- c. 50-70 %
- d. 100%

13. Indicate the highest level of education completed.

- a. college
- b. graduate school
- c. other – please indicate _____

**INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS
PLANNING MODEL**

Integrated Marketing Communications Planning Model

