

PUBLIC RELATIONS MANUAL

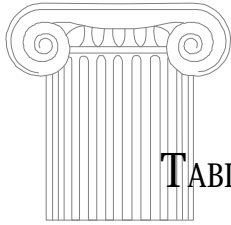


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OVERVIEW

The goal of this manual is to help active organizations establish an effective public relations program for the chapter. Whether or not members realize it, every chapter has a public image. What is yours? Members also help build that public image and should therefore be aware of the overall public relations effort of the chapter. Building a public relations program for a chapter takes involvement of members, time, and planning.



OBJECTIVES

Through the use of this manual, active Triangle Brothers will learn:

- ❖ How to evaluate the current public relations status of the chapter.
- ❖ How to develop attainable and realistic goals.
- ❖ What elements need to be included in a public relations program.
- ❖ How to produce a well-read chapter newsletter.



INTRODUCTION

It had seemed like such a good idea. The Greek community had been getting a lot of bad press lately. What better way to turn public relations around than to have an Open House? Chapters were enthusiastic about the prospect of meeting people face-to-face and showing them that Greeks weren't all bad. The IFC and Panhellenic helped coordinate the effort by sending press releases and public service announcements to local media, taking ads out in both the campus and community papers, and posting fliers throughout campus and the town.

The day of the event came. Chapter houses were spotless. Members were ready to meet and greet. Each chapter had a fact sheet prepared about its accomplishments. The Open House came, however, and went. Sure, there were people who visited the chapters during the Open House, but the throngs of visitors that had been expected failed to materialize. In fact, most of those people who participated were already friends or allies of the Greek community.

IFC, Panhellenic, and chapter leaders were dumbfounded. They had planned in advance, promoted the event heavily, and yet failed to achieve the results they had anticipated. They convinced themselves that the public just wasn't going to support the Greek community, no matter how hard they tried.

Let's Take Another Look

The right reaction? If you had been in their position, you would probably have felt the same way and been tempted to draw the same conclusion. They had planned an event they thought would be attractive to community residents, done all the preparation possible, and had little progress to show for it. Clearly, something had been wrong with the community members, not their event.

Let's reconsider that conclusion. Who was the Open House really designed for? Remember, the Greek community was getting bad press and this event was supposed to turn that around. Who had the most to gain from the Open House? Fraternities and sororities. What was the compelling interest for community members? If they did frown upon fraternities and sororities, why would they have chosen to give up their personal time to attend an event designed to benefit the Greek organizations? What motivation would they have had to participate?

Building positive public relations requires us to step out of our own perspective and look at things from the vantage point of others. That's not always as easy as it sounds. An activity that may seem like a sure success can be a total flop in the eyes of others. Remember New Coke and the Arch Deluxe? Yet, Coca Cola's and McDonald's leaders undoubtedly spent significant time and money conducting research that led them to believe introducing a new recipe was the right thing to do. When the market failed to respond, both companies introduced carefully worded press releases, trying to make it sound like results weren't really all that bad, that things would turn themselves around. What happened in the end? Coke went back to its old formula, calling it Coke Classic, and McDonald's returned to emphasizing its bread-and-butter menu for kids.



EXAMINING THE PERSPECTIVES OF OTHERS

Think of the publics of fraternities. Publics are those groups that have a stake in, or are affected by, the presence and activities of Greek organizations. Let's generate a list of people or constituencies that could be considered Fraternity publics:

- ❖ Faculty and administrators
- ❖ Community residents
- ❖ Other fraternity and sorority members
- ❖ Parents of members
- ❖ Unaffiliated students
- ❖ Members of your other Triangle chapters
- ❖ Members in co-ops
- ❖ Alumni
- ❖ The national officers and Headquarters staff
- ❖ National and local volunteers
- ❖ Local community service agencies
- ❖ Local businesses
- ❖ The media
- ❖ Other campus organizations
- ❖ Residence halls and their residents
- ❖ High school students considering attending your college or university
- ❖ Other Triangle chapters

The list could grow even longer. It should be apparent that a large number of people are potentially affected by the decisions you and your chapter make on a daily basis. Yet it is likely that your decisions don't often consider all of these various constituencies, what is important to them and their expectations for the Greek community. That is not unusual. We have to intentionally ask ourselves "How would our decisions and actions affect other people?" In fact, if you consider the definition of good public relations, that is only one of the many questions we should be asking ourselves:

"Good public relations is not publicity, advertising, notoriety, sociability, or personality. It is simply what causes various 'publics' interested in (or exposed to) fraternities to react favorably towards the fraternity.

"Public relations are made up of many subtle forces both external and internal to the organizations of which someone is a member, as well as the whole fraternity movement. Exemplary performance by the individual, and the group of which he is a member, is the determinant of successful public relations, and nothing else can take its place."
— The Interfraternity Research and Advisory Council

"Public Relations is a way of life, demonstrating through behaviors that for which your chapter stands. Publicity, on the other hand, is a functional part of public relations, a tool through which the public is informed about who you are and what you do. The difference is slight, but significant."

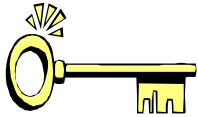
— The CFEA Public Relations Manual: *There are no Limits*

So we are judged by how we perform, and it is likely that different publics have different expectations for our performance, perhaps even in different areas. Imagine for a moment that you are a faculty member. What are the aspects of the university community that you value? You have spent more than a decade preparing yourself to be a professor, so what is now important to you?

Most likely you want to be in a university environment where students are committed to learning, and where the institution enjoys a positive reputation both locally and nationally. A place where you can engage yourself in teaching and research and have your contributions in both acknowledged. You also want to feel that you are part of an active, intellectual community.

Given those expectations, faculty members probably are not too excited when their college or university makes the list of the Top 10 Party Schools in the country. They aren't thrilled at the prospect of new member grade point averages dramatically trailing the grade point average for all new students. They are probably frustrated when Homecoming and Greek Week brings a lack of class attendance and participation from fraternity and sorority members. In other words, they judge us by *their* expectations.

Is that right? From their perspective (remember that is the perspective on which we are focusing), it is absolutely appropriate. From ours? We might feel we are getting a bad rap, being unfairly singled out, being picked on. In the long run, however, our image is going to be determined by the expectations of others and how well we meet (or fail to meet) those expectations. That does not mean that we should not challenge unfair or unrealistic expectations. We should. It does mean, though, that we must be more aware of, and sensitive to, the priorities, values, and expectations that our publics hold for themselves— and for us.



Tapping Into Others' Expectations

Let's go back to the Open House example. It was an event designed mostly to enhance the image of fraternities and sororities. In fact, it was almost a blatant attempt to say "Come meet us. You'll like us, really you will." It was an event designed less to do good than to make Greeks look good. Good public relations result from *doing* good. Our publics can see through an event designed exclusively for "image value."

So what would have been an event that might have better accomplished the goals set for the Open House? One example might be an event held successfully at another campus. At this campus, safety during Halloween trick-or-treating was a major concern for parents in the community. Fraternity and sorority members were aware of this concern and saw the opportunity to do good and give back to the community.

They planned a "Safe Night" for trick-or-treaters using their chapter houses. Chapters decorated their homes and fraternity members were costumed and ready with candy. Chapter members were also stationed outside of the homes, ready with flashlights to help direct people to the houses.

The event was again promoted the same as the Open House: press releases and public service announcements were distributed, fliers were posted, and ads were placed in local papers. The results? Hundreds of parents and their children visited chapter homes and trick-or-treated that evening. While their kids ran through the chapter house collecting candy, parents talked informally with chapter members in the common living areas, were given house tours, and received fliers describing the chapter and its accomplishments.

The campus and community papers were filled with positive letters to the editor, for a few days following the event. Parents wrote to thank the Greek community for meeting a need the community had and for its response to that need. Negative stereotypes were challenged, positive information was shared, and informal relationships were built. Public goodwill and a positive image was generated. *Note: unbiased letters came from publics, not from fraternity members—this carries much more weight in the community.*

So, what was the difference this time? The event was selected and designed from the perspective two publics: parents and the community. By shifting out of our own perspective and into that of our publics, we are more likely to make decisions, offer services, and plan events that meet their needs and expectations and cause us to feel successful.



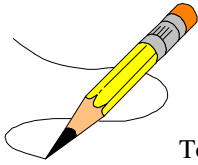
IT ALL STARTS WITH YOU: YOUR CHAPTER'S IMAGE

“Whatever other people think you are, think you do, or think they know about you from the way you look or talk is “image.” The image thing is sort of an energy loop. Think about it like a rock band: the better the band, the more enthusiastic the audience; the more enthusiastic the audience, the more the band puts everything they’ve got into a performance. People react to our image. We respond to their reaction by becoming more of what the image says we are. It’s called a self-fulfilling prophecy—Image won’t do everything for you—You have to produce. But the right image, the best image for you and for what you want to achieve will open doors for you and give you an edge and opportunities in a great many ways.” Sharon Carter and Penny Van Dyne, *Coping With Your Image*, New York: Rosen Publishing Group, 1985

Did you ever stop to realize that everything you say and everything you do in some small way contributes not only to your personal image, but also to the image of your chapter and the Greek community? If you do poorly in a class, does it have anything to do with the fact that you’re Greek? Maybe—or maybe not. But if the faculty member perceives your poor performance is attributed to your Greek affiliation, then the truth doesn’t really matter.

In the eyes of the beholder, perception is reality. That’s a challenging thought because we can’t control how others perceive us. The College Fraternity Editor’s Association (CFEA) says that public relations and our image is derived 90% from what we *do* and only 10% from what we *say*. Our actions really do speak louder than our words. While we can’t really control how others will perceive what we say or do, we do have the ability to control what *we* say or do. That’s why your chapter’s image really does begin with you.

In the next section of this manual you’ll find a quiz. Each member’s attitude, thoughts, and behaviors have an impact on your chapter’s image. Have each member take a few minutes and complete the self-analysis tool to assess his contribution to your group’s overall image.



THE PUBLIC RELATIONS AUDIT

Taken from the CFEA Public Relations Manual: *There Are No Limits*.

To determine where to go with your chapter's public relations program, it is first necessary to find out where you are. Whether your chapter knows it or not, the chapter has a public image based on:

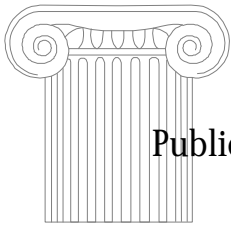
- ❖ Who you are.
- ❖ What you do.
- ❖ How you are perceived.

Once you know your strengths and weaknesses, then you can build a public relations plan to maintain your strengths and focus on your challenges. This process begins by surveying your members' opinions.

Step 1: Member Survey

Members are one important source of information when evaluating current public relations efforts. The member survey should be administered in a controlled setting such as at the end of a chapter or committee meeting. Collect questionnaires before leaving the meeting. All members should complete the questionnaire, including the chapter's executive council.

The results will provide opinions about publics with whom the chapter relates well and other publics with whom the chapter relates poorly. In the areas with high ratings, keep up the good work! The areas with low ratings are those which need to be addressed through public relations efforts.



Public Relations Survey for Chapter Members

Instructions: Following is a list of publics who are important to your chapter. Use the following scale (assigning a value based upon the number at the right of the response) to select that which best describes how you believe your chapter generally relates and interacts to each public: Poor (1), Average (2), Excellent (3).

	Poor	Average	Excellent
Families			
a) parents	1	2	3
b) siblings	1	2	3
c) hometown friends	1	2	3
Interfraternity			
a) sororities on campus	1	2	3
b) fraternities on campus	1	2	3
c) Panhellenic Council	1	2	3
d) Interfraternity Council	1	2	3
e) Greek advisor	1	2	3
f) non-Greek men and women	1	2	3
g) transfer students	1	2	3
h) potential members	1	2	3
i) student government association	1	2	3
j) residence hall association	1	2	3
k) non-Greek student leaders	1	2	3
l) ethnic leaders	1	2	3
Educators			
a) faculty	1	2	3
b) administration	1	2	3
c) trustees	1	2	3
d) high school teachers	1	2	3
Community			
a) local businesses	1	2	3
b) civic organizations	1	2	3
c) public officials	1	2	3
d) churches	1	2	3
e) philanthropic contacts	1	2	3
f) neighbors	1	2	3
Alumni			
a) chapter	1	2	3
b) house corporation board members	1	2	3
c) national fraternity headquarters	1	2	3
d) regional officers	1	2	3
News Media			
a) television	1	2	3
b) radio	1	2	3
c) community newspaper	1	2	3
d) campus newspaper	1	2	3
e) campus radio/TV	1	2	3

Using this scale, a score of 85 - 102 = exceptional, 68 - 84 = above average, 51 - 67 = average, 34 - 50 below average, below 34 = poor determine the overall score.

Step 2: Public Survey

The second step in the public relations program is to evaluate your chapter's public image. The public survey determines what various publics think of your chapter. To achieve a realistic evaluation, you need to research the opinions of your publics. Interview various people within each of the publics that the chapter associates. (A sample questionnaire for doing this can be found in the CFEA Public Relations Manual: *There Are No Limits.*)

The chapter should also complete a self-analysis for public relations. Use the following questions to do so. (Honesty is essential to get a true assessment.)



Chapter Self-Analysis for Public Relations

1. Do all members practice good public relations within the chapter?
 - a) How do they answer the phone?
 - b) Are they good neighbors?
 - c) Are they courteous to visitors?

2. Is the chapter well-respected on campus and in the community?
 - a) Does the chapter rank above the all-men's GPA?
 - b) Does the chapter participate in major IFC activities?
 - c) Is the chapter a leader in IFC affairs, including holding offices?
 - d) Do members hold offices in other campus organizations?
 - e) Does the chapter promote a spirit of Greek unity on campus?
 - f) Does the chapter keep its property free of litter and clutter?
 - g) Are neighbors provided chapters officers' names and phone numbers?

3. Is there a program to see that deserving members receive recognition in the campus paper, hometown papers and the chapter newsletter for superior performance in academic/extra-curricular pursuits?
 - a) Does the chapter cooperate with the local media and campus public relations office for coverage of chapter achievement?
 - b) Does the college/university alumni publication feature news of chapter and individual member activities?

4. Does your chapter make it a regular practice to invite faculty members to dinner, a program or a Greek event?
 - a) Do you invite them and their families when appropriate?
 - b) Do individual members have a positive rapport with administrators?

5. Does your chapter help with campus and community public service projects?
 - a) Does your chapter initiate newsworthy events such as speakers, service projects, or civic programs?
 - b) Does your chapter offer to lend assistance to civic groups?
 - c) Has the chapter adopted a formal resolution about a campus, local or national project/philanthropy?
 - d) Is your chapter regarded favorably by the media?

6. Does the chapter write letters or notes of congratulations?

- a) Are members of the faculty and administration, student leaders, and alumni recognized for their achievements and service?
- b) Does the chapter write to express its appreciation to the alumni association, house corporation, chapter advisors, campus Greek advisor, guests, and others?
- c) Does the chapter ever send congratulations to a competitor to whom they have lost in an intramural championship or other activity?
- d) Does the chapter send holiday greetings and notes for beravement?

7. Are letters to the chapter answered promptly and satisfactorily?

- a) Are copies of letters filed for reference?
- b) Are rush referrals acknowledged and handled properly?
- c) Is your correspondence with alumni, college/university administrators, and the National Headquarters handled in a professional basis (no spelling, grammatical, or typographical errors)?

8. Are your chapter's events for alumni carefully planned?

- a) Do you actively work to keep your alumni address list accurate?
- b) Do you provide proper notice for chapter alumni of chapter news, happenings, and events on a regular basis?
- c) Do you start planning and publicizing an alumni event at least 10 weeks in advance? Are alumni invited to the planning meetings?
- d) Are alumni invited to attend chapter meetings and initiation? Are they asked to serve as guest speakers on various subjects to the chapter membership?
- e) Do chapter officers and members attend alumni events?

9. Are copies of the alumni newsletter sent to the parents, neighbors, the National Headquarters, and other friends of the chapter?

- a) Do you also send it to new members' parents, faculty, and others with whom you have contact?
- b) Do the newsletters promote alumni interest in the chapter?
- c) Is the alumni newsletter written for alumni including alumni articles and photos?
- d) Are reports on chapter activities and achievements regularly forwarded to the Fraternity's national magazine?

10. Does your chapter have an effective public relations chairman?

- a) Does he have a committee?
- b) Has the chairman and/or committee established goals to improve the chapter's image and public relations?



Organizing for Public Relations

Step 3: Public Relations Chair and Committee

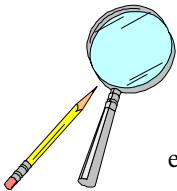
A chapter's Public Relations chair has a major role in the direction and success of chapter operations and his responsibilities should consist of (but not be limited to) the following:

PR Chairman

1. Chairs the Public Relations Committee and directs a public relations program to assist the chapter to achieve a favorable reputation in all phases of operation and activity.
2. Establishes and promotes chapter public relations standards.
3. Makes members aware that individual and collective actions contribute to the chapter's perception.
4. Seeks ways to improve and maintain good relations and communication with the chapter, on the campus, in the community, and on the national level.

Public Relations Committee

Members should be selected carefully possessing enthusiasm, creativity, responsibility, ambition, efficiency, commitment, and good communication skills.



Step 4: Goal Setting

As public relations involves every aspect of chapter life, the public relations program requires input and participation from the entire chapter. The entire PR committee, using research obtained in the chapter and public surveys, should formulate the goals for the public relations program. Use the following information to educate the committee on how to write public relations goals.

Each member of the PR committee will be responsible for suggesting one PR goal he feels is important based on the survey results. Once each member has provided a goal, the entire committee will determine the chapter's public relations program goals for the year.

What are the characteristics of effective goals? Goals are the objective of the public relations program stated in measurable terms to ensure that each objective is achievable. Well-written goals are SMART!

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Relevant
Trackable

Example: We will improve our relationship with other Greeks by planning and promoting at least two events this semester.

The goal is SMART because it meets these five characteristics:

Specific because it improves relationships with other Greeks.

Measurable because it states the number of events.

Attainable because these events are accomplished in a semester/year.

Relevant because it increases positive public relations among Greeks.

Trackable because the events can be evaluated during the semester/year in which they are implemented.

The target public for this goal is interfraternity. Secondary publics included news media, alumni, and educators.

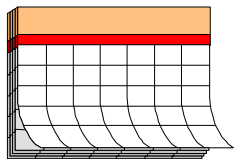


Step 5: Chapter Brainstorming

It is imperative that all chapter members understand that they are part of the public relations program—who they are, what they do, how they act! That is why the entire chapter must be involved and feel a sense of “ownership” in the public relations program. The goals of the public relations program cannot be determined without input from the chapter.

A common mistake made by many groups is trying to carry out an activity that grew out of an idea planned by a small nucleus of the chapter. The outcome is predictable—initial enthusiasm and support of the activity followed by minimal participation of group members.

Brainstorming is an effective technique that can foster positive internal public relations. A brainstorming session among chapter members offers everyone equal opportunity to suggest ideas no matter how bizarre. Every suggestion is written on a list. No ideas are criticized when suggested. All ideas are reviewed by the group and narrowed down to ideas that can be reasonably accomplished.



Planning for Public Relations

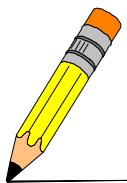
Step 6: Action Plan

Once the chapter has an approved set of public relations goals, the next stage is to create an action plan for each item.

The committee members will be responsible for working with the PR chair to implement the public relations program. Some of the objectives they will be working on include:

- a). Developing an action plan for each public relations goal and prioritize goals.
- b). Assigning members with responsibility for implementation.
- c). Establish a completion date for each activity.
- d). List the publics who will be affected by the activity.
- e). Discuss and determine why the “publics” would be interested in this activity conducted by our organization and why the chapter has focused on affecting these publics.

Remember: The public relations program is a chapter project and the more members who are involved, the better the results!



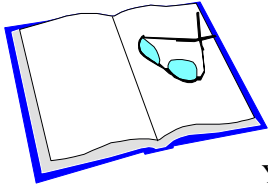
Step 7: Evaluation/Feedback

Because the public relations program is a building block process that continues from year to year, it is important to assess the accomplishments of the program to determine if the public relations goals were achieved before moving forward and setting new goals. For example, the public relations program may not be able to change a negative faculty opinion in one year, but the opinion can be reshaped if the chapter works on it in a consistent manner.

Some goals may need to be restated each year until a particular goal or behavior is achieved. Successful activities that accomplished specific goals may become regular programs for the chapter. At the end of the term, the public relations committee should complete a PR evaluation for each goal and retain these forms in a notebook for the next committee.

PREvaluation

1. Describe the activity.
2. What behavior created the desire for this activity?
3. What was the result?
4. What publics were involved?
5. How were opinions of the public(s) influenced by the activity?
6. Recommendations for next year.



EXAMINING OUR PUBLICS' EXPECTATIONS

Now that you have a better understanding of where the chapter is starting, how to build a public relations program, and the importance and value of shifting perspectives, it might be useful for you to intentionally examine the various publics associated with your chapter from their perspective.

You might want to gather some other chapter members and develop answers to the following questions, or you could use these questions at a chapter meeting or retreat and have each public discussed by a small group of members.

Faculty and administrators

- ❖ What are issues of concern to faculty and administrators?
- ❖ What activities does the chapter engage in that might be of interest to this public?
- ❖ How can you involve faculty in chapter operations as advisors, retreat speakers, etc.?
- ❖ What could the chapter do to cultivate better relations with faculty and administrators?
- ❖ What chapter activities are likely to be of concern to this public? How might those concerns be addressed?

Community residents

- ❖ What types of relations do you have with your neighbors?
- ❖ How do you proactively address likely neighbor concerns about noise, house appearance, etc.?
- ❖ What are potential ways for the chapter to positively contribute to the overall neighborhood environment?
- ❖ What are needs of the community and how can the chapter help address those needs through its volunteering and service efforts?
- ❖ Does the chapter have a plan in place for responding to concerns or complaints of neighbors?

Other fraternity and sorority members

- ❖ What does your chapter do to try and build good relations with all fraternities and sororities on your campus?
- ❖ How does your chapter's participation in other chapters' social events and service projects affect your relations with them?
- ❖ Should your participation be modified at all?
- ❖ How does your chapter respond to individual conflicts with other chapters?
- ❖ How could your chapter use its strengths to help support other chapters on campus that might be struggling?
- ❖ What type of involvement does your chapter have in IFC, and how can your participation be strengthened?

Parents of members

- ❖ What on-going communication does your chapter have with parents of members?
- ❖ What types of activities do you plan that involve parents in the chapter and in the overall university experience?
- ❖ Does your chapter have an active Mom's Club, Dad's Club, or Parents' Club? If not, how could you approach developing such organizations?
- ❖ What special effort does your chapter make to reach out to parents of new members?
- ❖ If there was a crisis in your chapter, how would you communicate with parents?
- ❖ When parents visit the chapter, how are they received? What effort do chapter members make to positively interact with them?

Unaffiliated students

- ❖ How are unaffiliated students affected by your chapter, both positively and negatively?
- ❖ What opportunities does your chapter have to use its existing calendar of activities to reach unaffiliated students?
- ❖ How does your chapter treat unaffiliated students who express interest in your chapter outside of the designated IFC recruitment time blocks?

- ❖ What image does your chapter project to unaffiliated students who might be visiting the chapter to make announcements at dinner, to study with chapter members, or to visit their friends?
- ❖ What image might unaffiliated students get of your chapter from chapter members who live on their residence hall floor, in their apartment complex, etc.?

Members of the Fraternity at other campuses

- ❖ Does your chapter consider how its actions affect other chapters of Triangle?
- ❖ How can your chapter benefit from the ideas of others, as well as share your successes with other chapters of the Fraternity?
- ❖ How can your chapter better support other chapters through participation in National Convention, leadership school, regional conferences, and other programs of this type?
- ❖ What does your chapter do to congratulate colonies that are installed as chapters?
- ❖ How does your chapter communicate with members of the Fraternity on other campuses?
- ❖ How are members of Triangle from other campuses treated when they visit your chapter? How do you treat members of the Fraternity on other campuses when you go to visit them?

Alumni

- ❖ Do you have an active year-round schedule of communications and activities for alumni?
- ❖ How does your alumni outreach program reflect the various generations (and their respective interests) represented in your alumni?
- ❖ Do you plan and promote alumni activities far in advance to allow alumni to clear their calendars?
- ❖ Do you plan events that allow alumni to involve their families?
- ❖ Do your alumni communications make an effort to share news of particular interest to alumni, or do they simply reflect an update on what's happening in the chapter?
- ❖ How are the financial contributions of alumni acknowledged by the chapter?
- ❖ What type of outreach does the chapter engage in to involve alumni as advisors, speakers at chapter events, etc.? How do you acknowledge their contributions?
- ❖ How are alumni who "just stop by" treated by members of the chapter?

The national volunteer officers and Headquarters staff

- ❖ What type of relationship does your chapter have with regional and national volunteers and Headquarters staff?
- ❖ What effort does the chapter make to communicate with national leaders and to share news of chapter successes?
- ❖ Is the chapter forthright with staff and officers when a chapter crisis has developed?
- ❖ How do you treat officers or staff members visiting the chapter?
- ❖ How does your chapter support and participate in regional and national programs and conferences?
- ❖ How well does your chapter meet its financial obligations to the National Fraternity?
- ❖ How well does your chapter comply with national policies and procedures?
- ❖ How does your chapter educate its members as to who the national officers and staff are and how to use them?

Other campus organizations

- ❖ Are there any all-campus organizations or activities that Greeks dominate? What could Greeks do to involve other campus organizations and other students?
- ❖ What chapter activities could you co-sponsor or collaborate on with other campus organizations?
- ❖ What do your members who are involved in campus organizations do to build relationships with others and to project a positive image of your chapter?
- ❖ How does your chapter educate its members about other campus organizations and how to get involved?



WORDS TO THE WISE

Much of building effective public relations for your chapter is common sense. Here are some common sense pointers to consider:

Substance first. The image will follow.

It is more important to *do* good, than to *look* good. When you or your chapter positively contributes in some way, others will notice. It won't always make the front page headlines, but it will contribute to the bank account of goodwill. When something goes wrong (and at some point it may), you can then draw upon this account and not lose your positive public image.

Quit worrying about the campus paper. Don't respond to every "anti-Greek" story that is printed.

You can waste a lot of energy trying to fight the press. The media takes notice of newsworthy events. When Greeks do stupid or inappropriate things, we are going to get coverage. We can eliminate much of the negative publicity if we better control the inappropriate actions of a few. If we don't do stupid things, there won't be negative stories to print.

This doesn't mean we should lie low when we are treated unfairly by the press. However, a barrage of defensive letters to the editor is only likely to trigger a similar response from anti-Greek writers. Sometimes it is best to just let a story blow over. Remember, we are probably more sensitive to the story than anyone else; after all, it is about us.

Get two for the price of one; combine events that impact more than one public.

Most chapters already have an overly ambitious calendar of programs and activities. How can you maximize the value from each event you are already planning? Can your alumni Homecoming celebration also be a food or clothing drive culminating in a donation to a local shelter? Can the time management workshops you are going to offer to new members be opened to all new students as a way of reaching out to unaffiliated students? Look at each and every thing your chapter does to find ways to "get the most mileage" out of your efforts in terms of public relations.

Do projects that benefit the university and surrounding community.

It is important to support the local publics who see you on a daily basis. You are a resident of your local community and the campus for the majority of the year. You should be concerned about the quality of life offered to you and other residents. Make sure some of your chapter's philanthropic efforts are designed to benefit the university and the surrounding community and the needs they have.

Recognize that all of the good may not be able to undo one bad act.

Your chapter has worked hard all year, doing extensive volunteer projects to benefit others and proactively reaching out to the community, parents, and alumni. However, this week, the new members decide to steal pumpkins off of the front porches of more than a dozen houses in the neighborhood and suddenly your chapter is in the news. Shouldn't you be cut some slack considering all of the good you've done?

NO. It's as simple as that. Yes, the positive contributions you make year-round should be taken into account when something negative happens, but they can't be used as collateral on the loan of trust you are extended from your publics. Think about it. How many service hours does it take to make up for sending a pledge to the hospital with an alcohol overdose? The system just doesn't work that way. We should do good because it is the right thing to do. When we do bad, we need to take responsibility for our poor judgment and deal with the consequences.

Overcommunicate—better safe than sorry.

You can never tell people too much, too early about events that the chapter hopes they will attend. While it is extremely positive to invite alumni to Ritual, it does no good if your invitation arrives a week before initiation. Alumni calendars don't operate on the same timetable as yours. Advance notice, and plenty of it, lots of reminders are the keys to success for soliciting the involvement of others in chapter events.

Don't reinvent the wheel. Borrow ideas!

Building positive public relations is a goal for most organizations, so you have a lot of good company in your effort. Tap into their talents and ideas. Have you ever visited the campus press department and asked for their ideas and/or assistance in promoting a chapter event? Have you ever considered involving alumni skilled in public relations in helping your chapter develop a year-round plan? Do you ask other chapters of the Fraternity for their most successful public relations ideas? Don't be afraid to consider any source for potential ideas, but always evaluate ideas in light of the expectations and needs of the public you are trying to affect. What works on one campus won't always work on another, but it is always worth thinking about the prospects of an idea you've borrowed from another source.

It's better to do a few things well than to do lots of things just good enough.

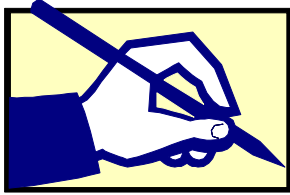
People remember successes. They also remember so-so efforts. Your chapter could get incredibly motivated about reaching out to its publics, overextend itself, and end up with a lot of average efforts. That will be remembered, and that will make future support from those publics more difficult to achieve. Select your efforts carefully. Plan far in advance. Communicate frequently. Build a tradition of small, incremental successes. Over time this is likely to serve your chapter well.

The smallest efforts often earn the greatest rewards: master the fundamentals.

While it can be tempting to think that strong public relations will result from big programs, raising thousands of dollars for charity, or winning national awards, the truth is that sometimes the smallest things yield the greatest impact. Simple things are often taken for granted. Here are a few that build enormous goodwill and take very little time or effort:

- ❖ Be a good host or hostess when you have guests.
- ❖ Promptly send “thank you” notes to those who help the chapter.
- ❖ Acknowledge the contributions of your alumni.
- ❖ Consider how your chapter’s actions will affect your neighbors.
- ❖ Pick up after yourselves when you use a campus facility or hold a public event.
- ❖ Promptly and courteously answer the house phone.
- ❖ Promptly answer e-mail.

The difference is in the details. While big efforts can draw lots of attention, the compounding effect of daily attention to the small things can yield similar results. Remember to master the fundamentals.



SPREADING THE WORD

One of the fundamentals you should master is how to effectively share the good word about programs and events your chapter is planning. Sources for information on good public relations are numerous and may be as close as the public information officer on your campus. An excellent printed publication you should have on hand is the CFEA Public Relations Manual:

There Are No Limits. It is available from your National Headquarters, or you can obtain a copy by calling the National Interfraternity Conference at 317-872-1112.

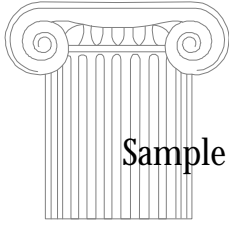
Press releases and public service announcements are simple, free forms of publicity your chapter can use to get the word out. Local media are bombarded with releases on a daily basis, so you want to make sure you send yours early and then resend it closer to the event. It also is appropriate to make a follow-up phone call to the editor to inquire about its receipt and whether or not someone will be able to cover your event.

Here are some general guidelines for writing news releases:

- ❖ Start your release off with a catchy heading, as well as the name, address, and phone number of a contact person to provide additional information.
- ❖ Place your most important information in the first couple of paragraphs. Typically the basic facts of your event (who, what, where, when) should fall within your first paragraph. Editors tend to cut the bottom of press releases, so place extra background information near the end.
- ❖ Make your copy concise, focused, and to the point. Releases are designed to gather attention to cover your event, not to tell the whole story.
- ❖ Keep your sentences short and stick to the facts.
- ❖ Include eye-catching photos with suggested captions, whenever possible. Your release might not always make it in, but papers can use photos in many cases.
- ❖ Make sure your release is typed, double-spaced, and contains no errors.
- ❖ If your release extends to the back side of your first page, put MORE at the bottom of page one. If it ends on the first page, put ##### at the conclusion.
- ❖ Mail or deliver your release directly to the editor or reporter covering your “beat” whenever possible.
- ❖ Send a thank-you note if your release is published or if your event gets covered.
- ❖ For releases sharing information about the results of an event just held, make sure to send the release immediately after the event’s conclusion to ensure timeliness of the information.

Here are some things to remember about print journalists. Most of them, particularly the better and more experienced ones, are very jaded about attempts to steer a story. You’re not going to sucker a reporter into doing a puff piece—don’t try. Reporters don’t deliberately cast a story one way or another, for political or personal reasons. Some, however, do it unwittingly and some are lazy. That’s true in any business. The sad truth is that if you don’t give these reporters the information, they’re not likely to dig it up on their own. Happily, they are still in the minority. You can give your side of the story to most reporters and probably get a fair shake.

The bottom line is this: most journalists take a great deal of pride in their work. They strive for balance and fairness—in short, they seek to serve truth. Some serve imperfectly. However, they are not evil and they are not your enemy.



Sample News Release

For Immediate Release.

For more information, contact:

Chris Jones
222-222-2222
4500 Greek Lane
Anywhere USA, 12345

Local Bowlers to Help Strike Out Muscular Dystrophy

For the fifth consecutive year, the XYZ chapter of Triangle Fraternity invites you to sharpen your bowling skills while raising money to help support Muscular Dystrophy research. Bowling will occur from 8 am-8 pm on June 22 at the Woodland Lanes on East 15th Street. All ages and levels of experience are invited to participate. For pledge forms and more information, call Chris at 888-123-4567.

Last year, total pledges exceeded \$6,000, and this year's goal is to reach \$7,500. "Each year participation keeps growing so we believe we have a very good chance to reach our goal," said Pat Anderson, co-chair for the event. Last year's top pledge-getter, Sam Smith, concurred: "My whole family has participated since the event's inception, and we challenge others in the community to get involved this year. With their help we can top last year's effort."

The bowling marathon is one just one of the many local service activities that helped the XYZ chapter of Triangle Fraternity win an award last year for Outstanding Community Support. Established at Local University in 1945, the XYZ chapter has a long history of philanthropic service to the local community and also has been recognized for its efforts by its national organization.



About public service announcements

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires local radio stations to run announcements for events being held in the communities they serve. This is another free exposure opportunity for your chapter and its programs.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) should be sent at least two weeks prior to the event being held. The station has the right to edit your announcement and determine if and when it will be aired, as well as the number of times it will be read.

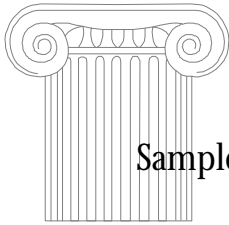
Like news releases, PSAs should be brief and to the point. Two to four sentences is the general rule of thumb. Again, start with a catchy heading and move straight to the facts. Write your announcement in three different lengths: 60 seconds, 30 seconds, and 10 seconds.

Make sure a contact person is provided for additional questions about the release and about the actual event itself.

The same rules for PSAs on radio generally also apply to television, except that television time is generally harder to obtain. For television, look for stories that have video appeal. Some television stations may be looking for a 10 to 30 second “filler”—your event just might fit the bill.

Television has replaced newspapers as the medium providing the majority of people with most of their news. One unfortunate aspect of this transition is that some TV reporters are not particularly skilled journalists. This means that the burden is back on you, as a source or a voice in a story, to make sure you’ve adequately communicated your points, and done so in a compelling and accurate fashion.

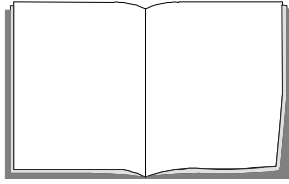
The most important thing to remember is that TV is the “dominate” medium in one sense—once again, it’s how most people hear of news first. (Radio is second.) This means you need to think about what and how you are saying is going to be presented. A 10-minute, sit-down interview with a reporter may well be condensed to a few seconds of tape and a “sound bite.” You must be succinct and “on message.”



Sample Public Service Announcement

Help Strike Out Muscular Dystrophy at Local Bowling Marathon

The XYZ chapter of Triangle Fraternity invites you to sharpen your bowling skills while raising money to help support muscular dystrophy research. Bowling will occur from 8 am-8 pm on June 22 at the Woodland Lanes on East 15th Street. All ages and levels of experience are invited to participate. For pledge forms and more information, call Chris at 222-222-2222.



PRODUCING AN EFFECTIVE CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Each chapter should produce some type of chapter newsletter. Newsletters are an excellent way of relaying information to alumni and parents about the chapter and its members. They can also be used to highlight chapter activities and accomplishments for faculty and administrators.

Your chapter newsletter should be prepared with your alumni in mind. They, after all, represent the bulk of your readership. Remember that alumni have a different perspective on activities and items of importance than undergraduates. The following information will help you produce a readable and informative chapter newsletter that your chapter will be proud of and that alumni will enjoy receiving.

From a presentation by Merle Newlon at Triangle Fraternity's Herbert F. Scobie Leadership School, August 1996.

Reasons Why Your Chapter Should Have a Newsletter

NEWSLETTERS:

1. Greatly enhance your chapter's reputation.
2. Are the most effective, most attractive way of getting news to your alumni.
3. Provide valuable information about the chapter.
4. Are relevant, timely and welcome, and remind your alumni that you are concerned about their interests and not just their financial contributions.
5. Re-state the goals and activities in which the chapter is involved.
6. Are a very dignified, subtle way to promote contributions.
7. Present a professional, winning image to current alumni and potential members.
8. Demonstrate the permanence, reliability and consistency of your chapter.
9. Display your willingness to serve others.
10. Reward alumni by featuring stories about them.
11. Are a good way to introduce new members, activities and projects to alumni.
12. Say something good about your chapter on a regular and frequent basis.
13. Give your chapter added exposure, thereby increasing your chances for new members.
14. Are not canned and impersonal like junk mail.
15. Present your chapter in the best possible light to alumni. Counters the media stories on "Frats."
16. Educate your alumni in a non-threatening way.
17. Improve relations with your alumni.
18. Motivates actives by recognizing them in print for achievements, such as Homecoming floats or scholastic achievements.
19. Feature members' activities both in and out of the chapter house, promoting a happy atmosphere.
20. Give your chapter an opportunity to find out what members want to know via "Question & Answer" columns.
21. Let your members know what's happening on campus.
22. Promote camaraderie among members.
23. Showcase awards that your chapter, or individual, has won.
24. Are a great way to present informal news about members.



Tips on Producing a Good Chapter Newsletter

If you're writing and designing your chapter newsletters, here are a few guidelines on getting the most out of your efforts.

KEEP YOUR STORIES SHORT, SIMPLE AND CLEAN

Good writing commands attention, even if your design lacks creativity.

KEEP A SIMILAR STYLE THROUGHOUT

Don't have one story in first person and another in third.

CHECK YOUR WORK

Have someone double check your articles for grammar, spelling, punctuation, syntax, and clarity.

AVOID CLICHES

Avoid expressions such as "a good time was had by all," or "it goes without saying," or "needless to say."

LEARN ABOUT TYPEFACES

Also learn about leading (the space between each line of type), how to make a layout and how to make your copy fit your layout. A good point type is 12 point for text. Serif fonts are preferred over sans serif type.

AVOID MIXING TOO MANY TYPEFACES

There are a lot of choices, but keep in mind that a good newsletter must be easy on the eyes. Too many type styles are hard on the eyes. The general rule is one style for headlines and another for text.

HAVE A GOOD MIX

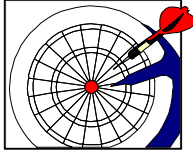
Include photographs and art work in your newsletter. Nothing is more boring than reading straight text.

DON'T GET TOO FANCY WITH PRINTING

The main objective of your newsletter is that it gets read. Stay away from colored ink for text—newsletter articles look best in black or dark blue. Use a second and/or third, color sparingly—for screen tints, large drop caps at the beginning of an article, page numbers, and any other graphic that is repeated throughout the newsletter. Too much use of another color is distracting to the reader. Print your newsletter on an easy-to-read paper—white, off-white, light gray, or beige. Avoid "loud colors" such as red, green, blue, yellow, orange, etc. Uncoated or matte finishes are preferred for readability over glossy papers.

NEWSLETTERS ENHANCE COMMUNITY PUBLIC RELATIONS

Positive and energetic activities convey a positive message to alumni and parents, and that presents a good image for your chapter. Because newsletters generally are read by many more people than just those who initially receive them, your good image will be widespread.



Characteristics of Effective Newsletters

When you produce a newsletter, you probably seek to achieve a few goals: to inform, sell, market and/or persuade. Regardless of your purpose, it's important that you give readers information they will save and a reason to read-on. Ideally, your newsletter will not end up in the "circular file."

- ❖ Target to your alumni and outside readers (parents, rushees), not actives.
- ❖ Present a professional, winning image: highlight all your activities. Parties are fun but cover your scholastics, community service, and academic related activities.
- ❖ Highlight the accomplishments of your chapter—be more informative than sales oriented and include a response mechanism.
- ❖ Motivate your alumni by recognizing them for their achievements.
- ❖ Involve your readers. Ask questions. Profile an alumnus and/or an active. Include photos, graphics, charts, and quotes.
- ❖ Provide valuable, provocative information. Oftentimes, newsletters are loaded with filler and fluff. Provide information which will interest your readers.
- ❖ Great newsletters inform, market, and sell; however, they don't brag. Readers are often turned-off by newsletters which try too hard to sell.
- ❖ Be consistent. In regard to both your publication schedule and graphic look, consistency is key. If you commit to a consistent schedule, it shows your readers that you give the same attention to your products and/or service.
- ❖ Have fun. Producing a newsletter should not be a tiresome task, rather, you should enjoy the opportunity to communicate through your publication. Be creative. Refrain from cutting corners. Exploit your strengths and build on weaknesses. Your enjoyment of the process will be reflected in your final publication.



How to Spot a Bad Newsletter

It's easy to create an ineffective newsletter. In fact, many chapters do. Here are some common pitfalls—and some effective solutions.

NO BENEFITS MESSAGE:

Your alumni aren't looking for poorly written rehashes of officer reports. They're looking to see that "their" chapter is a chapter to be proud of. Tell them about successes, however small, and what approaches the chapter is taking to solve problems in the house.

UNREADABLE TYPEFACE:

That fancy typestyle might look classy on the screen, but it can be so hard to read that your alumni could toss it in the trash. Keep your type simple enough and large enough to get your message read.

TOO WORDY:

You may have a lot to offer, but don't get carried away. Your alumni lead busy lives. Make it simple for them to understand what is going on and how their chapter is doing.

POOR DESIGN:

Nothing turns off a reader faster than long dull columns of black type. Focus your readers' attention with creative graphic elements—art, photos, boxes, screen tints. That will help them better understand your message. The best layout and writing can be undone by poor artwork or photos. So don't be too clever. Too many newsletters wander away from their purpose and are cluttered with too many graphics. Print your master copy on a laser printer for the best output.

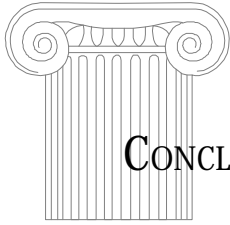
INADEQUATE PREPARATION:

Puffy rhetoric is another turn-off. It results from too much hype and too few facts and numbers to support your statements. And, by the way—NO FACTUAL ERRORS! Double check your work to ensure all facts are true.

PORTRAY THE "WRONG MESSAGE":

Avoid using any photos with alcohol or inappropriate gestures displayed. It's okay to talk about the social activities but balance the newsletter with stories of other activities. Wives and friends see these newsletters also.

For further, more specific information on publishing a chapter newsletter refer to the CFEA Public Relations Manual: *There Are No Limits*.



CONCLUSION

Generating a positive image and good public relations is a responsibility for you as an individual and your chapter as an organization. Focus on the attitudes and behaviors that positively reflect individual and organizational values, good results are likely to be attained. Through regular self-examination at both the individual and chapter level, as well as consistent personal and organizational goal setting, a positive image can be achieved in the community and on campus.



POSTSCRIPT

This edition of the Triangle Public Relations Manual combined resources including The College Fraternity Editors Public Relations Manual: *There Are No Limits*; Like Minded People: *External Publics*; and the expertise of Brother Merle Newlon, former *Triangle Review* Editor.