Public Relations Journal Vol. 5, No. 3
ISSN 1942-4604

Are We Practicing What We Preach? Perspectives on Public Relations Evaluation from Practitioners

Susan Grantham, Ph.D., Edward T. Vieira, Jr., M.B.A., Ph.D and Christina Trinchero

The Public Relations Society of America and the Institute for Public Relations have entire sections of their organizational websites dedicated to public relations evaluation and measurement. Additionally, there are books and articles that discuss measurement techniques, what to measure, why measurement is important, and who should conduct evaluation measurement.

Notwithstanding this attention, there is no clear understanding about 1) whether strategic plans developed by practitioners are actually being measured for effectiveness or 2) what practitioners think about conducting quantitative and qualitative evaluation. Questions remain about who is driving this activity-- management or practitioners?

The purpose of this study was to explore what factors may influence the inclusion of measurement as a function of public relations and why it is occurring in some places and not in others. This project looked at current measurement and evaluation practices; perceived attitude toward the need to measure by the practitioners' organizations; and the practitioners' perspective on measurement. Results suggest that those (including senior management) involved with strategic planning value PR measurement. Organizations that communicate the strategic nature of their PR and communications facilitate a climate of performance assessment and by implication greater accountability. This was evident in the differences between government and "for profit" organizations. There were no differences in types of measurement tools used and gender was not a factor.

LITERATURE REVIEW

"Program evaluation is gaining ground among public relations professionals," according to Harvey Jacobson in a 1980 article (p.7). By 1991, attitudes toward evaluation had morphed into, "Measurement and evaluation of public relations programs have become the industry equivalent of the weather . . . Everybody talks a lot about it, but nobody does anything about it" (1991, Newlin, p.40). A 1993 article claimed a "growing climate of accountability" (Hauss, p. 14). In 2007, Michaelson and Macleod provided an overview of the history of public relations research, which documented that the interest in this topic continues to rise and fall with some regularity. Currently, there appears to be a resurgent interest in measuring public relations effectiveness from the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the Institute of Public Relations (IPR), and the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC).

Through professional and academic support, there has been the steady creation and distribution of information on the importance of strategic planning through evaluation. More specifically, there exists how-to resources about available assessment methods. For example, PRSA offers Research, Measurement, and Evaluation Boot Camp. Additionally, dozens of articles are available from the IPR on this topic, providing both specific and general information such as the *Dictionary of Public Relations Measurement and Research* (Stacks, 2006), best practices (Paine, n.d.; Phillips & Paine, n.d.; Villamizar, Restrepo & Alfaro, n.d.; Michaelson & Macleod, 2007), and selecting the best measurement strategies and systems (Holloway, 1992). Moreover, IABC is continuing its annual conference series on measurement. Despite the emphasis on this topic by professional associations, we do not know if practitioners are adopting these methods and incorporating them in their strategic planning.

Evaluation answers the question, “What do you do?,” a statement often directed at practitioners by providing quantitative and qualitative data to substantiate the value of public relations strategies and their corresponding activities. Additionally, effective public relations’ measurement and evaluation may be even more desirable as recent economic trends have seen decreases in funding public relations development, an increase demand for fiscal accountability, and the marginalization of the public relations function as it relates to marketing and advertising (Kim, 2001).

The need for measuring communication effectiveness and evaluating outcomes is not in dispute from a theoretical perspective. From a professional perspective, evaluation can lead to better communication with an increased impact that not only serves the organization’s position and reputation but as a cost effective strategy (Freitag, 1998). It is true that there is no single, easily understood, standard measurement tool that can be adopted industry-wide to evaluate public relations; however, there is adequate information available that informs practitioners on how to evaluate public relations activities that address organizational needs.

However, the concepts of measuring and evaluating this work can evoke apprehension. According to a *Communication World* study, the top three reasons practitioners noted for not measuring were cost, time, and expertise (Branford, 2005). A lack of training in research methods may contribute to these reasons (Rockland, 2009). Additionally, the perception that the dominant coalition does not value or even require this level of accountability may also play a pivotal role in public relations professionals not implementing these practices.

It is suggested that public relations practitioners and scholars should speak in management’s language about sales, productivity, and return on investment. However, researchers posit that these terms cannot be generalized to all industries (Anderson, 2007). The management approach suggests a lack of flexibility as well as a heavy relevance on using numbers to prove public relations effectiveness. This does not mean there is not a commonality between management’s goals and the function of public relations. The dominant coalition may want results that focus on market share and profitability, which is a common yardstick used to assess organizational health, but evaluation can also measure relationship management and provide a longer-term barometer of how an organization is positioned versus a snapshot that validates last quarter's fiscal postings. It can measure corporate image, brand equity, and the internal organizational "climate," which ultimately impacts the bottom-line.

Numerous articles discuss the value of public relations measurement, the vast array of expectations related to this function, the methods used in pursuit of documenting the value of public relations, and some baseline metrics that should be achieved (Grunig, 1977a, 1977b; Hon 1997, 1998; Broom & Dozier, 1990; Lindenmann, 1997). These arguments are augmented with additional information about establishing measurable objectives so that evaluation can be factored into the overall public relations process (Anderson, Hadley, Rockland & Weiner, 2009). Lindenmann's (2006) resource booklet furthered the field by providing specific recommendations as to what type of research and measurement strategies should be used for outputs (materials), outtakes (output message received, understood, and retained) and outcomes (a change/reinforcement in opinion or behavior), and how to relate this information to organizational goals.

Public relations plans are developed to effectively communicate with internal and external stakeholders as well as the general public. Yet, case studies in trade and academic publications illustrate that evaluation typically focuses on the effectiveness of external communication (Galezka, Gelders, Verckens, & Seydel, 2008; Henderson, 2005; Tokarski, 1999), or they take the approach of how to conduct measurement as well as what metrics to use, regardless of audience (Yungwok, 2000). The effectiveness of internal communication has been featured less often and vacillates between a focus on relationship management and the successfulness of well-designed output (Dortok, 2006; Spurlock & O'Nell, n.d.; Brown & Kelly, 2006). These foci lack an integrative approach that addresses the entire PR assessment process incorporating both internal and external audiences.

PR ROLES AND FACTORS

Practitioner Role

Over the decades, practitioner categories were developed to define the range of activities associated with public relations work. Initially, these categories included communication technicians, expert prescribers, communication facilitators, and problem solving process facilitators (Broom, 1982; Broom & Smith, 1979; Dozier, 1984). These functions were collapsed into two major categories: manager and technician. The manager's role embraces the expert prescriber, problem solving process facilitator, and communication facilitator. The technician's role is designed to develop materials to support the strategic plan developed by management. Eventually Hogg and Doolan (1999) build a case for the problem-solving process facilitator as a go-between role; it is someone who uses a rational problem solving process that is also involved in public relations activities. This allows for two-way communication between management and practitioners leading to a focused effort by the organization to communicate with its stakeholders.

Practitioner Gender

Numerous studies have examined the role of gender in public relations (O'Neil, 2004; Toth & Cline, 1991; Toth & Grunig, 1993; Tot, Serini, Wright & Emig, 1998). Women make up 60-70 percent of the public relations workforce (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002; Toth, 2009). A study by Toth and Grunig (1993) found that both women and men perform technical and managerial functions, although the percentage of time spent in both managerial and technical activities varied between the sexes. Studies have shown that women factor loadings for the technical function are typically higher than men, and women are often "performing both management and technician activities" (Toth & Grunig, 1993, p.168).

There has been a fair amount of discussion as to why women have seemingly remained in technician or technician/management roles. Do they lack confidence, (Wright, Grunig, Springstons, & Toth 1991), are women just expected and capable of handling the additional managerial work (Toth & Grunig, 1993), or is it industry-related (Toth & Grunig, 1993)? Another viewpoint is that "upward influence," or the transfer from technical function to more a management-oriented status, is determined by the type of organizational power and not gender (O'Neil, 2004). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that when females retain a strictly technical role, they are not involved in measurement and evaluation, but when female practitioners have both technical and managerial duties, they may incorporate an assessment function in their work.

Organizational Type

Practitioner demands and roles can be determined in part by the organizational environment. A stable, low threat organization will predominantly rely on public relations technicians since the work is most likely repetitive and predictable. Their decision-making is what Simon (1997) calls programmed and largely consists of turnkey activities, use of heuristics in repetitive decision-making, and predictable outputs. Organizations that are volatile and more complex in function will rely more on expert prescribers and strategic planners (Cutlip, Allen & Broom, 1994). These individuals have the occasion for making non-programmed decisions. This type of work explores novel solutions to new and complex challenges where decisions are made with imperfect information.

Organizational typography has played a pivotal role in public relations research (Grunig & Grunig, 1989, Grunig, L. A. 1992). Research has shown that archetypes explain, in part, the degree to which public relations' power and perceptions of power add value to an organization. According to Grunig and colleagues, the following schema exists:

- Mechanical organizations are large scale but low in knowledge complexity.
- Traditional organizations are smaller with low knowledge complexity.
- Organic organizations are small scale with high knowledge complexity.
- Mixed mechanical/organic organizations are large scale with high knowledge complexity

Schneider's (aka L. Grunig, 1985) research indicated that public relations practitioners functioned in the managerial role only within the mixed mechanical/organic organizations which benefitted from size and complexity.

Certain industries may be representative of these organizational types. For example, a non-profit organization may typically be a mixed mechanical/organic organization with a large number of employees who conduct research, provide public information, and utilize extensive environmental scanning in order to remain current on issues, trends, and laws that may impact the organization. Product or service driven organizations may range in size but revolve around low complexity issues that do not require the same level of strategic planning. Additionally, there is the government sector. Common within this realm there is the public information model (Grunig & Grunig, 1992) with a focus on providing information which constituents can use but for which there is little desire for feedback. An example of this is the Center for Disease Control that provides research data and recommendations but does not rely on, or even benefit from, citizenry feedback.

Consequently, public relations demands vary based on the range of strategic planning used, with more measurement associated with greater strategic planning and complexity.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In summary, the need to measure public relations effectiveness has been bandied about for decades with high and low peaks of interest. There is a considerable body of information that discusses why measurement is important, how to design meaningful metrics, and how to incorporate this assessment in the overall strategic planning process. What is not clear is how much of this work is actually taking place. The purpose of this study is to explore what factors may influence the inclusion of measurement as a function of public relations, and why it is occurring in some places and not others. Therefore, the following research questions provide the basis for the study.

> RQ1: First, is there a demand, real or perceived, for public relations measurement from the organization's dominant coalition?
>
> RQ2: If the practitioner is part of the dominant coalition, or included in strategic planning by the dominant coalition, is there more of a demand for PR measurement?
>
> RQ3: What is the relationship among the perceptions of PR measurement and the organization's focus on strategic or tactical communication functions?

RQ4: If there is a demand for PR measurement, practitioner gender and his or her role in the organization, predict whether measurement is a function of the job?

RQ5: If there is a demand for PR measurement, is it specific to certain types of organizations or industries?

RQ6: When utilized, what measurement tools were reported by respondents as most used?

METHOD

Sample and Procedure

A formal application was submitted to the Public Relations Society of America Research Foundation requesting their assistance in recruiting participants. Upon approval of the request, PRSA drew a random sample of 5,000 members and, via email, invited them to participate in the study. PRSA sent a follow-up reminder to the same participants two weeks later. The questionnaire was posted on a website and the invitees were provided a link to the site. People who were invited to participate in the study, but whose primary function was to teach, were sent to a separate page that thanked them for their interest and informed them that this study was investigating how current practitioners were incorporating measurement and evaluation. Of the 5,000 people invited to participate, 256 (5.1%) practitioners completed the survey.

There were 66% women (n = 170) and 34% men (n = 86). Twenty-six percent of the respondents were 40 years old or younger (n = 68), 29% were between 41 - 50 (n = 74), 34% were between 51 - 60 (n = 86), and 11% were 61 or older (n = 28). Ninety-one percent reported White (n = 234) as ethnicity, 5% Black (n = 13), 2% Hispanic (n = 6), 1% Asian (n = 2), and .4% Other (n = 1). One percent of respondents (n = 2) reported no education beyond high school, 54% associate/bachelor (n = 137), 41% master (n = 106), and 4% doctorate (n = 11). The mean number of years in the profession was 20.5 (*sd* = 10.05) years and median was 20 (range 1 - 50) years. Primary work functions were: manager (31%, n = 78), technician (10%, n = 26), manager/technician (44%, n = 113), and consultant (15%, n = 39). Participants reported working in the following types of organizations: corporations (29%, n = 75), non-profit (26%, n = 65), PR and communications agency (21%, n = 55), government (10%, n = 25), and other (14%, n = 36). Practitioners participated from across the nation with 44% from both the northeast and southeast (n = 112 for both categories), 19% from the Heartland (n = 49), 15% from the southwest (n = 39), 11% from the mid-Atlantic (n = 29), 6% from the northwest (n = 15), and 5% were international (n = 12).

A questionnaire was developed and pilot tested. The survey examined whether the demand for measurement was a function of the dominant coalition or practitioners themselves, and what methods were used in measurement and evaluation. A variety of demographic questions were included to potentially explain the differences among the respondents such as number of years in the profession, role in the organization, educational background, industry affiliation, gender, geographic location, etc.

Measures

Importance and demand for PR measurement was operationalized using eight items anchored in a 5-point scale ranging from high (5) to low (1). The items were: “My organization considers public relations and communications activities” (extremely valuable-not valuable); “Management considers measuring public relations impact to be...” (very important-very unimportant); “In your view, providing measured results on perceptions of the organization’s image is _____ required” (always-never); “In your view, providing measured results for how the organization’s products/services are positioned is _____ required”; “In your view, providing measured results regarding the impact of a campaign is_____ required”; “The CEO/CFO of our organization would like us to present quantifiable results tied directly to our public relations effort”; “Do you think that providing measurable results about public relations effectiveness is important” (strongly agree-strongly disagree); and “The communications budget I work with is tied to measurable results.”

To further understand the relationship between the organization’s PR measurement perspective and the dominant coalition, we asked the aforementioned questions from the perspective of the position held by the respondent. The three of the four specific dominant coalition questions were: “I am part of the organization’s senior management”; “I report to the organization’s senior management”; and “I participate in strategic planning for the organization.” These items were anchored in a 5-point scale ranging from “strongly agree” (5) to “strongly disagree” (1). Next, we asked about work function and asked participants to chose from: “My primary work function is: manager, technician, manager/technician, and consultant.”

Additionally, we asked about which channels respondents utilized to communicate with their organizations’ management. These items were anchored in a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = very infrequently to 5 = very frequently. The items were memos, email, reports, face-to-face meetings, social media, intranet, and other formats.

Last, we inquired about the measurement tools used. Respondents answered “most often,” “sometimes,” and “least often.” The items were: clipping services reports, pre- and post-campaign surveys, content analysis of clipping, interviews with representative of key publics, focus groups, inquiry tracking after a media event (mail, web, & phone), web site hit tracking, other, and don’t evaluate. The study instrument consisted of 42 items.

ANALYSIS

All scale level data were tested for normal distribution. In cases where the data were not normally distributed, we used the Games-Howell post hoc test in lieu of Bonferroni. Additionally, there was one question which asked the respondent to indicate the industry where he/she worked at the time of the study. Eighteen categories, including an "other" group were discovered. Each case was independently coded by the researchers and Cohen Kappa was run to test for intercoder reliability, which was .90. Additionally, descriptives, a series of analysis of variance, and correlations were conducted.

RESULTS

Given that the name of the survey was "Measuring Public Relations," we anticipated a small response rate of participants who would self-select into the study and this premise was supported based on the respondent's age, number of years in the public relations profession, affiliation with the organization's management team, or participation in the organization's strategic planning. Practitioners who work in technical roles were probably not involved in developing, tracking, or reporting evaluation results other than providing the products containing the information. Thus, it is probable that many of the recruited participants did not respond to the invitation because they did not perform work in this area at this stage of their career.

RQ1: Is there a demand, real or perceived, for public relations measurement from the organization's dominant coalition?

As Table 1 indicates, respondents perceived that "Do you think that providing measurable results about public relations effectiveness is important," "My organization considers public relations and communications activities," and "In your view, providing measured results regarding the impact of a campaign is_____ required" as very valuable and required by the organization (m = 4.49, *sd* = .71; m = 4.10, *sd* = .87; and m = 4.04, *sd* = .96, respectively). There was little dispersion in these responses. The lowest mean was "The communications budget I work with is tied to measurable results" (m = 2.75. *df* = 1.23), which contained the widest dispersion of responses. Thus, it would appear that although participants in general clearly viewed PR measurement as important, a clear linkage between measurement and financial resources was not apparent and responses were widely dispersed.

Through correlational analysis, we then examined the communications tools used by respondents according to their reporting and participating status to senior management and strategic planning respectively. No significant paths were revealed.

Table 1: Perceived Demand for Public Relations Measurement			
Item	**N**	**Mean**	***SD***
1. My organization considers public relations and communications activities to be ______.	256	4.10	0.87
2. Management considers measuring public relations impact to be ______.	256	3.52	1.19
3. In your view, providing measured results on perceptions of the organization's image is ______ required.	256	3.69	1.06
4. In your view, providing measured results for how the organization's products/services are positioned is ______required.	256	3.84	1.00
5. In your view, providing measured results regarding the impact of a campaign is______required.	256	4.04	0.97
6. The CEO/CFO of our organization would like us to present quantifiable results tied directly to our public relations effort.	256	3.48	1.24
7. Do you think that providing measurable results about public relations effectiveness is important?	256	4.49	0.71
8. The communications budget I work with is tied to measurable results.	256	2.75	1.23

Note: Items were anchored in a 5-point scale ranging from 5 = high to 1 = low.

RQ2: If the practitioner is part of the dominant coalition, or included in strategic planning by the dominant coalition, is there more of a demand for PR measurement?

First, we coded the independent factors into two groups (low = 1-3 and high = 4-5). Next, we computed one-way ANOVAs comparing respondent's position (low and high) by the demand for PR measurement items.

There were a number of significant differences where participants higher in the organizational hierarchy tended to indicate greater importance for PR results measurement. Of those who were "part of the organization's senior management," they perceived that their organization valued PR and communication more than those not in senior management ($F(1, 254) = 28.11$, $p < .001$). They considered PR measurement's impact to be more important than those who were not in this coalition ($F(1, 254) = 4.43$, $p < .05$). This perspective also applied for PR measurement associated with corporate image, brand equity, communication campaigns in general, and direction from the CEO. See Table 2. Both senior management and others believed measuring PR effectiveness was important ($F(1, 254) = .11$, $p > .05$). The significant differences reflect senior management's strategic perspective.

One significant difference was discovered between those who reported to senior management and "In your view, providing measured results for how the organization's products/services are positioned is _____ required." Those reporting directly to management founds this function to be more required than those do did not report to senior management ($F(1, 254) = 4.62$, $p < .05$). This suggests an emphasis on direct revenue generating PR/communication activities.

Next, we considered those members who participated in strategic planning. The significant differences were similar to those of senior management. Members who participated in strategic planning indicated the importance of measurement in achieving their organizational goals (see Table 2). A correlational analysis of the items in their original metrics evinced the same findings.

Table 2: Analysis of Variance By Reporting Position (n = 256)

Item	**Senior Management**		**Report to Senior Mgmt.**		**Part. in Strategic Planning**	
	Low Mean (*SD*) N=116	**High Mean (*SD*) N=140**	**Low Mean (*SD*) N=71**	**High Mean (*SD*) N=185**	**Low Mean (*SD*) N=81**	**High Mean (*SD*) N=175**
1. My organization considers public relations and communications activities.	**3.80* (0.96)**	**4.35* (0.69)**	4.11 (0.79)	4.10 (0.90)	**3.65* (0.96)**	**4.31 (0.72)**
2. Management considers measuring public relations impact to be.	**3.55* (1.14)**	**3.66 (1.20)**	3.58 (1.00)	3.50 (1.25)	**3.19* (1.16)**	**3.68 (1.17)**
3. In your view, providing measured results on perceptions of the organization's image is required.	**3.54* (1.22)**	**3.81 (0.97)**	3.56 (1.00)	3.74 (1.07)	**3.46* (1.12)**	**3.79 (1.00)**
4. In your view, providing measured results for how the organization's products/services are positioned is req.	**3.65* (1.07)**	**3.99 (0.91)**	**3.62* (1.05)**	**3.92 (0.98)**	**3.54* (1.04)**	**3.93 (0.98)**
5. In your view, providing measured results regarding the impact of a campaign is req.	**3.91* (1.07)**	**4.15 (0.86)**	3.86 (0.92)	4.11 (0.98)	**3.78* (1.07)**	**4.16 (0.90)**
6. The CEO/CFO of our organization would like us to present quantifiable results tied directly to our public relations effort.	**3.31* (1.28)**	**3.62 (1.20)**	3.48 (1.23)	3.48 (1.25)	**3.04* (1.35)**	**3.69 (1.13)**
7. Do you think that providing measurable results about public relations effectiveness is important?	4.51 (0.69)	4.48 (0.72)	4.37 (0.76)	4.54 (0.68)	4.41 (0.70)	4.53 (0.71)

*Note: Independent factors = low (1, 2, or 3) in functional category and high (4-5) in same. Dependent item scales range from high = 5 to low = 1. *p < .05.*

Additionally, we ran a correlation between the measurement items and years working in PR. No significant differences were found. We then ran an ANOVA by work function (manager, technician, manager/technician, and consultant) and found differences between function and “My organization considers public relations and communications activities” ($F(3, 252) = 7.47$, $p < .001$), “In your view, providing measured results for how the organization’s products/services are positioned is _____ required” ($F(3, 252) = 3.94$, $p < .05$), and “The CEO/CFO of our organization would like us to present quantifiable results tied directly to our public relations effort” ($F(3, 252) = 7.81$, $p < .001$). See Table 3. Respondents who self-identified as technicians generally perceived less value in PR when it involved sales-related activities. They thought that PR communication activities were not as highly valued by their organizations as the other work function category participants indicated. Additionally, they did not think that the CEO valued measurement as much as the other groups noted. These findings might indicate that technicians maintain an existential perspective, may not have been exposed to assessment metrics or perhaps not much audience-centered research materials, and have a revenue generating focus their job descriptions. Findings further suggest that a role in strategic planning facilitates the value of PR measurement. By the nature of the position, senior management is exposed to strategic planning and thus is at least in part exposed to the assessment component of strategic planning. Therefore, the dominant coalition, in so much that they are engaged in strategic planning, perceive the importance of PR measurement. This also intimates that a level of planning or assessment exposure involvement by technicians might also foster the value of PR measurement through the organizational culture. Last, as these findings revealed, it is not years in PR, but involvement in relevant areas, that encourages the development of well-rounded organizational members, and this involvement can occur in a relatively short period.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance By Work Function (n = 256)

Item	**Work Function**			
	Mgmt Mean (*SD*) N=78	**Technical** Mean (*SD*) N=26	**Mgmt./ Tech.** Mean (*SD*) N=113	**Consult**. Mean (*SD*) N=39
1. My organization considers public relations and communications activities.	4.17 (0.80)	**3.38* (1.10)**	4.15 (0.83)	4.31 (0.73)
2. Management considers measuring public relations impact to be.	3.68 (1.12)	3.19 (1.23)	3.40 (1.18)	3.79 (1.24)
3. In your view, providing measured results on perceptions of the organization's image is required.	3.91 (0.98)	3.50 (1.14)	3.56 (1.07)	3.74 (1.02)
4. In your view, providing measured results for how the organization's products/services are positioned is required.	**4.01* (0.96)**	**3.46* (1.07)**	**3.70* (1.05)**	**4.13* (0.77)**
5. In your view, providing measured results regarding the impact of a campaign is req.	4.15 (0.90)	3.81 (1.13)	3.96 (1.00)	4.18 (0.85)
6. The CEO/CFO of our organization would like us to present quantifiable results tied directly to our public relations effort.	3.86 (1.13)	**2.69* (1.32)**	3.31 (1.22)	3.74 (1.16)
7. Do you think that providing measurable results about public relations effectiveness is important?	4.55 (0.70)	4.31 (0.79)	4.46 (0.75)	4.59 (0.50)

*Note: Independent factors = low (1, 2, or 3) in functional category and high (4-5) in same. Dependent item scales range from high = 5 to low = 1. *p < .05.*

Because of these findings, we then examined the inter-relationships among those involved with senior management and strategic planning, and primary work function with item "Do you think that providing measurable results about public relations effectiveness is important." This would provide some light on the influence of work function and interaction with senior management on attitudes toward measurement and by extension assessment. We found one significant interaction between work function and reporting to senior management ($F(3, 248) = 3.03$, $p < .05$). The significant relationships were between technicians who reported less to senior management ($m = 4.07$, $sd = 0.92$) and technicians who reported more to senior management ($m = 4.57$, $sd = 0.52$), followed by combined managers/technicians ($m = 4.20$, $sd = 0.76$; $m = 4.53$, $sd = 0.73$) and consultants ($m = 5.00$, $sd = 0.00$; $m = 4.48$, $sd = 0.57$). These findings imply that exposure to strategic planning and interaction with senior management fosters the value of PR measurement within many organizational members, but not with consultants.

RQ3: What is the relationship among the perceptions of PR measurement and the organization's focus on strategic or tactical communication functions?

In order to explore this question, a correlational analysis was conducted among perceptions of organizational PR as strategic, PR as technical and product oriented, and the measurement items. Although the correlations among "My organization considers PR to be technical and product oriented" and the measurement items were not significant, the correlations with "My organization considers PR to be a strategic function" were significant and robust. The measurement items were as follows: "Management considers measuring impact to be valuable" (r = 56, p < .01); "The CEO/CFO of the organization would like us to present quantifiable results tied directly to our public relations effort" (r = .50, p < .01); "In your view, providing measured results regarding the impact of a campaign is required (r = .37, p < .01); "In your view, providing measured results for how the organization's products/services are positioned is required" (r = .31, p < .01); and "In your view, providing measured results on perceptions of the organization's image is required" (r = .27, p < .01).

Additionally, we calculated a paired-sample t test between the strategic and technical perspectives. The mean for the strategic perspective was 3.87 (sd = 1.05) and the mean on the technical/product oriented perspective was 3.01 (sd = 1.13), which represented a significantly difference between them (t(255) = 8.69, p < .001). These findings suggest that respondents' organizations view PR more as a strategic function that is closely linked to PR measurement rather than PR with a tactical focus with little nexus to assessment. However, no relationship was found between the strategic perspective and the participants' response to "Do you think that providing measurable results about public relations effectiveness is important." Yet, the mean score for this item was the highest of the measurement items (m = 4.49, sd = 0.71). This implies that although the respondents perceived value in PR measurement, they did not connect it to the strategic nature of their PR function (m = 3.87, sd = 1.05).

RQ4: If there is a demand for PR measurement, does practitioner gender and his or her role in the organization, predict whether measurement is a function of the job?

In order to discover any interaction effects, a 4 (primary work function) x 2 (gender) between-participants factorial ANOVA was conducted comparing the measurement items by work function (manager, technician, manager/technician, and consultant) and gender. No significant interactions were found. This indicates that work function and a person's gender did not influence any responses to the PR measurement items.

RQ5: If there is a demand for PR measurement, is it specific to certain types of organizations or industries?

We computed a one-way ANOVA comparing responses to the PR measurement items by industry. No significant differences were found. Next, we compared the measurement items by organizational type and found significant differences in two items. “In your view, providing measured results for how the organization’s products/services are positioned is required” ($F(5, 250) = 2.35$, $p < .05$) differed significantly by government ($m = 3.40$, $sd = 1.12$) compared to PR and communication agency ($m = 4.05$, $sd = 0.76$) and corporation ($m = 4.00$, $sd = 1.02$). The other item was “The CEO/CFO of the organization would like us to present quantifiable results tied directly to our public relations effort” ($F(5, 250) = 4.48$, $p < .01$). Again, government ($m = 2.86$, $sd = 1.17$) significantly differed from PR and communication agency ($m = 3.85$, $sd = 0.98$) and corporation ($m = 3.77$, $sd = 1.20$). This finding suggests that measurement is relatively not as much a priority in government as facilitated by leadership nor as a performance metric concerning the services that government provides. If the role of public relations practitioner within the government office is simply to provide the information, there is not the same perceived need to measure its effectiveness. This implies that accountability through measurement may not be a priority compared to corporations and PR and communication agencies. Although not significant, non-profit means were on a par with government scores.

RQ6: When utilized, what measurement tools were reported by respondents as most used?

For the most part, participants indicated “sometimes” for all items. The mean ranges were 1.92 – 2.06 ($sd = .78 - .92$). The choices were “least often,” “sometimes,” and “most often.”

DISCUSSION

Public relations, properly done, provides a strategic component to an organization’s success. Documenting the value of this function has been difficult because public relations deals with awareness, attitudes, and behavior beyond purchasing a product or service involving psychometric as well as econometric measures. Public relations measurement provides a long-term perspective about an organization’s perceived value to its various publics.

Numerous articles have been published to guide practitioners on how to measure and evaluate their work in order to document and demonstrate the value of public relations. Interest in this topic has intensified again in recent years, which is evidenced by a renewed focus on this topic by professional organizations such as PRSA and IABC. This study explored existential factors influencing the inclusion of measurement as a function of public relations and why it occurred in some places and not in others.

A limitation to this work is that participants were self-selected. Practitioners not involved in measuring public relations effectiveness were less likely to participate. Practitioners who are involved in this type of assessment were more inclined to be a part of the organization's dominant coalition or to participate in strategic planning, which is evident in our findings.

Logically, practitioners who function as a member of the dominant coalition, reported to senior management or participated in strategic planning. These practitioners agreed that assessing public relations activities is important and that public relations is valued by the organization. Practitioners who provided technical support did not believe that public relations activities were highly valued or that measurement of these activities was valued. Although technicians did not clearly indicate a dominant mode of communication, our findings imply that measurement and/or assessment were not key aspects in their interaction. For instance, what would be the nature of face-to-face communication as opposed to written communication? Moreover, perhaps within face-to-face there is context. For example, does face-to-face communication primarily occur in a formal or informal setting? These circumstances and more may influence the topic of measurement and assessment, especially when evaluation practices are measures of accountability.

Based on the results of this study, practitioner gender did not predict whether measurement was a function of the job. Fully two-thirds (66.4%) of the respondents were females and most reported being part of the dominant coalition, reporting to the dominant coalition, and/or participated in strategic planning. Given that between 60 - 70 percent of public relations practitioners are females, this result indicates that women are moving into the dominant coalition, or directly communicating with members or the dominant coalition, at an increased rate over what has been presented in previous studies.

Organization type did predict whether public relations' measurement results were required. Respondents who work in a government agency, which is typically large in nature and less complex, reported less of a demand to measure and report results than practitioners working for a corporation or as a consultant. Given that the function of government communication is largely to inform, this result is expected. Corporate practitioners and certainly practitioners working as consultants are more inclined to function in high complexity environments where evaluation would be desired and valued.

Overall, the need to measure public relations activities appears to be on the rise. This increase seems to be instigated by practitioners who are strategic planners or part of the dominant coalition and that this practice is more of a ground up rather than a top-down demand. As practitioners grow and mature into these roles, evaluation seems to be a standard part of the job. This is further facilitated by the Internet and social media, where web behavior is easily recorded and stored for analysis. Additional research into which measurement activities are employed and the methods used to communicate these results can provide insight into channels for practitioners and those working in the management/technical area to bridge the gap between them and the dominant coalition. It is an opportunity for practitioners to document the value of public relations even within organizations that are less complex and that vary in size.

REFERENCES

Anderson, W. (2007). Speaking the language of management: Applying the performance prism to public relations assessment. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 12(2), 120-133.

Anderson, W., Hadley, L., Rockland, D., & Weiner, M. (2009). Guidelines for setting measurable public relations objectives: An update. *Institute for Public Relations.* http://www.instituteforpr.org/files/uploads/Setting_PR_Objectives.pdf

Bird, S. (2003). How NCR revitalized its global PR function: Building a measurement system that aligns PR with business priorities. *Strategic Communication Management*, 7(6), 4-6.

Bransford, K. (2005). Just measure. *Communications World*, 22(1), 16-21.

Brown, A., & Kelly, S. (2006). Linking employee research to business performance *Strategic Communication Management*, 10(6), 22-26.

Broom, G. M. (1982). A comparison of sex roles in public relations. *Public Relations Review. 8*(3), 17-23.

Broom, G. M., & Dozier, D. M. (1990). *Using Research In Public Relations: ApplicationsTo Program Management*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Broom, G. M., & Smith, G. (1979). Testing the practitioner's impact on clients. *Public Relations Review, 5*, 47-59.

Cutlip, S. M., Allen, H. C., & Broom, G. M. (1994). *Effective Public Relations, 7th ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.*

Dortok, A. (2006). A managerial look at the interaction between internal communication and corporate reputation. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 8(4), 322-340.

Dozier, D. M. (1984). Program evaluation and roles of practitioners. *Public Relations Review*, *10*(2), 13-21.

Freitag, A. R. (1998). How to measure what we do. *Public Relations Quarterly, 43*(2), 42-47.

Galezka, M., Gelders, D., Verckens, J.P., & Seydel, E. (2008). Transparency and performance communication: A case study of Dutch Railways**.** *Corporate Communications*, *13*(4); 433-447.

Grunig, J. E. (1977a). Evaluating employee communication in a research operation. *Public Relation Review*, 3(4), 61-82,

Grunig, J. E. (1977b). Measurement in public relations. An overview. *Public Relations Review, 3(4),*5-10.

Grunig J. E., & Grunig, L.A. (1989). Toward a theory of public relations behavior of Organizations: Review of a program of research. *Public Relations Research Journal Annual, 1,* 115-131.

Grunig, J. E., & Grunig, L. A. (1992). Models of public relations and communication. In J. E. Grunig (Ed.) *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (467-482). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Grunig, L. A. (1992). How public relations/communication departments should adapt to the structure and environment of an organization . . . and what they actually do. In J. E. Grunig (Ed.) *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (285-326). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Grunig, L. A., Grunig, J. E., & Dozier, D. M. (2002). *Excellent Public Relations and Effective Organizations: A Study of Communication Management in Three Countries*. Routledge Communication Series.

Hauss, D. (1993). Measuring the impact of public relations. *Public Relations Journal, 49*(2), 14-20.

Henderson, O.K. (2005). Evaluating public relations effectiveness in a health care setting: The identification of communication assets and liabilities via a communication audit. *Journal of Health and Human Services Administration, 28*(1/2), 282-321.

Hogg, G., & Doolan, D. (1999). Practitioner roles in public relations. *European Journal of Marketing, 33*(5/6), 597-611.

Holland, R., & Gill, K. (2006). Managing measurement costs. *Communication World,* (23)1, 19-24.

Holloway, D. (1992). How to select a measurement system that's right for you. *Public Relations Quarterly, 37*, 15-18.

Hon, L. C. (1998). Demonstrating effectiveness in public relations: Goals, objectives and Evaluation. *Journal of Public Relations Research*. *10*(2), 103-135.

Hon, L. C. (1997). What have you done for me lately? Exploring effectiveness in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 9*(1), 1-30.

Jacobson, H. K. (1980). Guidelines for evaluating public relations programs. *Public Relations Quarterly, 25*(2), 7-10.

Kim, Y. (2001). Measuring the economic value of public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 13*(1), 3-26.

Lindenmann, W. K. (May, 2006). Public relations research for planning and evaluation. *Institute for Public Relation.* *http://www.instituteforpr.org/files/uploads/2006_Planning_Eval.pdf*

Lindenmann, W. K. (1997). Setting minimum standards for measuring public relations effectiveness. *Public Relations Review, 23*(4), 391-408.

Michaelson, D., & Macleod, S. (2007). The application of "Best Practices" in public relations measurement and evaluation systems. *Public Relations Journal, 1*(1). http://www.prsa.org/Intelligence/PRJournal/Fall_07/

Newlin, P. (1991). A public relations measurement and evaluation model that finds movement of the needle. *Public Relations Quarterly, (36)*1, 40-41.

O'Neil, J. (2004). Effects of gender and power on PR managers' upward influence. *Journal of Managerial Issues, 16*(1), 127-145.

Paine, K. D., (n.d.). How to set benchmarks in social media: Exploratory research for social media, lessons learned. *Institute for Public Relations.* *http://www.instituteforpr.org/files/uploads/SetBenchmarks_SocialMedia.pdf*

Phillips, M. R., & Paine, K. D. (n.d.). Doing measurement right: One organization's experience creating a best-in-class measurement program from scratch. *Institute for Public Relations.* http://www.instituteforpr.org/files/uploads/DoingMeasuremtRight.pdf

Rockland, D. (2009). If you can't measure it, it doesn't count. *Comprehension.* http://comprehension.prsa.org/?p=628

Simon, H. A. (1997). *Administrative Behaviour: A Study of decision-making processes in administrative organizations*. Fourth Edition. New York City, N. Y.: Free Press.

Sinickas, A. (2005). How to learn more about measurement. *Strategic Communication Management, 9*(2), 12.

Spurlock, B., & O'Neil, J. (n.d.). Measuring and evaluating an intranet designed to enhance employee communication and two-way communication. *Institute for Public Relations.* *http://www.instituteforpr.org/files/uploads/MeasEvaluating_Intranet.pdf*

Stacks, D. W. (2006). Dictionary of public relations measurement and research. *Institute for Public Relations.* Retrieved from http://www.instituteforpr.org/ipr_info/dictionary_public_relations/

Tokarski, K. (1999). Give and thou shall receive**.** *Public Relations Quarterly, 44*(2), 34-41.

Toth, E. L. (2009). Diversity and public relations practice: Essential Knowledge Project. *Institute for Public Relations.* http://www.instituteforpr.org/essential_knowledge/detail/diversity_and_public_relations_practice/

Toth, E. L., & Cline, C. G. (1991). Public relations practitioner attitudes toward gender issue: A benchmark study. *Public Relations Review 24*(2), 145-163.

Toth, E. L, & Grunig, L. A. (1993). The missing story of women in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 5*(3), 153-175.

Toth, E. L., Serini, S. A., Wright, D. K., & Emig, A. G. (1991). Trends in public relations roles: 1990–1995. *Public Relations Review, 17*(2), 161-174.

Villamizar, C., Restrepo, M., & Alfaro, A. (N.D.). Formulation of a measurement scale from the perceptions a community has of a corporate brand based on the implementation of a corporate social responsibility program. *Institute of Public Relations Research.* http://www.instituteforpr.org/research_single/formulation_of_a_measurement_scale_from_perceptions/

Wright, D. K, Grunig, L. A., Springston, J. K., & Toth, E. L. (1991, November). Under

the glass ceiling: An analysis of gender issues in American public relations. *PRSA Foundation Monograph Series 1(2).*

Yungwook, K. (2000). Measuring the bottom-line impact of corporate public relations. *Institute for Public Relations.* http://www.instituteforpr.org/files/uploads/1998_Kim.pdf