



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
Annenberg School for Communication

STRATEGIC PUBLIC RELATIONS CENTER
GAP III

**3rd ANNUAL PUBLIC RELATIONS GENERALLY ACCEPTED
PRACTICES (GAP) STUDY (2004 DATA)**

Sponsored by the Council of Public Relations Firms

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

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GAP III STUDY

I. INTRODUCTION: GOALS, METHODOLOGY, AND

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This annual study plays a major role in the accomplishment of the mission of the USC Annenberg Strategic Public Relations Center (SPRC):

To advance the study, practice and value of the public relations profession by conducting practical, applied research in partnership with other visionary organizations.

The Strategic Public Relations Center and this study owe their existence to the generosity of the visionary organizations that have supported our efforts.

We are especially grateful to the Council of Public Relations Firms and its president, Kathy Cripps, for underwriting GAP III.

Our thanks also go to our ongoing sponsors:

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We are enormously grateful to these outstanding organizations and their PR teams, as should be all PR practitioners who benefit from the findings contained in this report.

The objectives of the GAP series are to:

1. Assess the overall health and strength of the public relations profession.
2. Identify trends and emerging issues based on year-over-year comparisons of GAP data.
3. Compare the manner in which the PR profession is practiced and organized among companies identified as “Most Admired” by *Fortune Magazine* as compared with all others.

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Objectives (cont'd)

4. Assess the perceived importance of the PR function relative to other organization functions.
5. Determine how organizations perceive the value of, use, and organize their in-house PR departments, and how they work with external public relations agencies.
6. Ascertain current Generally Accepted Practices (GAPs) and explore “Best Practices” for PR.
7. Identify gaps in knowledge requiring further investigation.
8. Provide PR practitioners with practical, applied research that will be of immediate use to them, thereby helping them to improve their effectiveness.

Comments on response:

As a result of several mailings to approximately 8500 organizations a total of 347 senior level practitioners (approximately 4%) completed all or most of the 34-question GAP III survey, either on line or in hard copy. From a statistical standpoint the pool of respondents constitute a representative sample of corporate America, especially the Fortune 2000. Data was also gathered from government and non-profit agencies. In cases where insufficient responses were received from a particular organizational or revenue category, or in response to a particular question, the data were not used. The data were collected on an ongoing basis in the fourth quarter of 2004 and the first quarter of 2005, and analyzed during the second quarter of 2005. The authors believe that no significant changes occurred that would have caused important variations in the data from the beginning to the end of the data collection process.

Comments on methodology:

Four principal methods were used to analyze the data:

1. For each of the individual survey questions, **raw frequencies** were tabulated for all the respondents.
2. Where applicable, **factor analyses** were performed to reveal underlying patterns in the data.

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Comments on methodology (cont'd):

3. **Explicit comparisons** were made between important sub-groups, e.g., companies that employ outside public relations agencies and those that do not.
4. **Correlations** between major segments of the questionnaire were also performed to reveal additional, underlying patterns in the data.

Report Structure:

The report that follows is divided into major sections, each with specific-subject sub-sections:

Section I: Introduction: Goals, Methodology, Acknowledgements.

Section II: An Executive Summary of all key findings.

Section III: An overview of the entire findings relative to all respondents, including year-over-year changes from GAP II, and in some cases, GAP I as well.

Section IV: An explicit comparison between those respondents whose companies are included in Fortune's "Most Admired Companies" list and those that are not, including year-over-year changes from GAP II.

Section V: An explicit comparison between public and private companies, as well as government and non-profit agencies, including year-over-year changes from GAP II.

Availability:

As a service to the profession, the USC Annenberg Strategic Public Relations Center has made the entire GAP III Study available, at no cost, to all interested parties. It can be downloaded (in sections) at www.annenberg.usc.edu/sprc.