



**FIFTH ANNUAL PUBLIC RELATIONS  
GENERALLY ACCEPTED PRACTICES (G.A.P.) STUDY  
(2007 DATA)**

**GAP V**

**SECTION I: INTRODUCTION: GOALS, METHODOLOGY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

**By**

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## **I. Introduction: Goals, Methodology, and Acknowledgements**

This fifth annual GAP Study plays a major role in the accomplishment of the mission of the USC Annenberg Strategic Public Relations Center:

*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 organizations that have supported our efforts:

*Avery Dennison  
The Council of Public Relations Firms  
General Motors  
Hewlett-Packard  
The Home Depot  
Ketchum  
Lohan Media  
Nike  
Nissan North America  
Occidental Petroleum  
Raytheon  
Toyota  
Weber Shandwick*

*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.*

## USC Annenberg Strategic Public Relations Center

The goals of the center are to:

- Assess the effectiveness of PR techniques
- Develop new techniques
- Maximize recognition among senior management of the value of effective, ethical techniques
- Help to define the evolving role of PR
- Elevate the skills of practitioners
- Contribute to the continued development of the optimal PR curriculum at USC Annenberg

### Comments on GAP V response

<b>GAP V Respondent Profile: Field of Work Descriptions</b>		
<b>Title</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
Public Relations	82	15.77%
Communication	220	42.31%
PR and Communication	8	1.54%
Other	135	25.96%
Not provided	75	14.42%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

As a result of several mailings to approximately 10,000 organizations, a total of 520 senior level practitioners completed all or most of the 38-question GAP V survey, either online or in hard copy form. (By way of comparison, the first GAP Study consisted of a 25-question instrument sent to 4,600 senior PR professionals in the U.S., 350 of whom responded.)

<b>GAP V Respondent Profile: Job Description Titles</b>		
<b>Title</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
Executive Vice President	1	0.19%
Senior Vice President	15	2.88%
Vice President	94	18.08%
Executive Director	7	1.35%
Senior Director	11	2.12%
Director	171	32.88%
Senior Manager	0	0.00%
Manager	61	11.73%
Other	81	15.58%
Not provided	79	15.19%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

From a statistical standpoint, the pool of respondents constitutes a representative sample of the profession. In cases where insufficient responses were received from a particular organizational or revenue category, or in response to a particular question, the data were either included with cautionary notes (to establish a baseline against which to measure increased future response rates), or not used at all.

The data were collected on an ongoing basis in the fourth quarter of 2007, and analyzed during the first quarter of 2008. The authors believe that no significant changes occurred in the period between the beginning of the data collection process and the writing of this report in the second quarter of 2008, though some changes may have taken place due to the uncertain, and possibly deteriorating, economic situation.

## Comments on Methodology

Four principal methods were used to analyze the data:

- For each of the individual survey questions, **raw frequencies** were tabulated for all the respondents.
- Where applicable, **factor analyses** were performed to reveal underlying patterns in the data.
- **Explicit comparisons** were made between important sub-groups, e.g., companies that employ outside public relations agencies and those that do not.
- **Correlations** between major segments of the questionnaire were also performed to reveal additional, underlying patterns in the data.

## Comments on Changes in Content

- The authors recognize that practitioners are primarily interested in data that is the most relevant to their own situations and organizations. Ergo, for the second time in the GAP series, GAP V breaks out information from five specific categories:
  - In Section V: Not-for-Profit Organizations and Government Agencies
  - In Section VI: Health Care, Manufacturing, and Technology
- With the experience and data from five reports over six years in hand, we are also now prepared to recommend for the first time certain selected best practices to which the PR/Communications profession can aspire. Those recommendations and the analysis that stands behind them can be found in Section VII.

## **Report Structure**

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

**Section I:** Introduction: Goals, Methodology, and Acknowledgements

**Section II:** Executive Summary of Key Findings

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

**Section IV:** Comparisons between public and private companies, including selected year-over-year changes from previous GAP Studies

**Section V:** Analysis of government agencies and not-for-profit organizations

**Section VI:** Analysis of respondents from three high-profile industry categories: Health Care, Technology, and Manufacturing

**Section VII:** Best Practice Communications

## **Availability**

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

## **Information**

For information on the Strategic Public Relations Center, including how your organization can help support its work, contact the center's director, Professor Jerry Swerling ( [swerling@usc.edu](mailto:swerling@usc.edu) ), who is also director of USC's graduate and undergraduate public relations programs.