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

GAP V

SECTION VII: BEST PRACTICE COMMUNICATIONS

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VII: Best Practice Communications

As previously stated, the name of this study – Public Relations Generally Accepted Practices (GAP) – was selected after a great deal of deliberation. Some thought was given to using the term “best practices,” but the idea was initially discarded. This is because the study would reveal trends and frequency in usage of various practices, but the fact that many practitioners frequently employ a practice does not necessarily mean that it is a *best* practice. The fact that particular approaches to problems, or particular organizational structures, are commonly used does not prove that they are the *best* approaches or structures. For a practice to be deemed *best* it must consistently be associated with demonstrable, positive outcomes that are better than those associated with other practices.

However, with the results of GAP V the authors are prepared to suggest to the reader that we are now able to cross into the territory of true *best practices*. When analyzing the data in all GAP studies the authors have been particularly interested in discovering patterns of behavior common to substantial numbers of respondents. This was achieved by identifying statistically significant correlations through which it could be said, with a reasonable level of assurance, that respondents share certain characteristics based on their common responses to specific questions. In other words, those who provided the same answers to specific questions would be significantly more likely to provide similar answers to other questions as well. By applying this methodology, responses to single questions could be extrapolated to identify larger patterns of shared behavior, attitudes, etc.

In GAP studies I – IV, the authors noted fairly consistent patterns of responses to various questions. However, up until this point, the authors’ comfort level regarding the characterization of those patterns was not sufficient to do more than simply report and comment on them.

Now, with the experience that has come from publishing five GAP studies over a span of seven years, and the confidence that has come from seeing similar (though not always identical) patterns appear year after year, the authors are prepared to more firmly characterize those patterns and to suggest that those which have been consistently positive in nature are suggestive of *best practices*.

This section details the most salient correlations found among the GAP V data, with commentary regarding what they might suggest about *best practices*. In each case, reference is made to the section of the GAP V report containing the question and data on which each correlation is based.

The authors fully acknowledge the somewhat subjective nature of their observations, which are based on extensive experience in the field in addition to the GAP data. They further acknowledge that at this point they cannot scientifically demonstrate causality. However, because the patterns are unmistakable, and because the PR profession is in great need of progress in this area, they felt compelled to share their findings with the reader as a basis for further exploration of *best practices*. In future studies they will further explore the use of correlations in identifying best practices, based on the hypothesis that there is a cause and effect relationship at work, at least to some degree. They welcome reader comments on their methodology – both positive and negative – with one caveat: any criticism must be accompanied by suggested alternative approaches to their methodology, and/or variations on their methodology that will advance, rather than derail, the discussion.

VII/A: Correlations with Gross Revenue

(From III/A-1: Respondents by Organization Size (U.S. Gross Revenues))

- a. Statistical correlations reveal that companies with **higher gross revenues** are more likely to:
 - Have **larger** PR budgets
 - Have **larger** PR staffs
 - Work with PR agencies
 - Work with **more** PR agencies (when they do use PR agencies)
 - Use PR agencies (when they do use PR agencies) because:
 - They provide additional arms and legs
 - They have resources in geographies or markets where the clients need them

- b. Statistical correlations reveal that companies with **higher gross revenues** are significantly less likely to:
 - Use PR agencies (when they do use PR agencies) because they have the ability to quantify results

The data suggest to us that:

*Organizational size, as gauged by gross revenue, is not in itself an indicator of anything that might be thought of as a **best practice**.*

VIII/B: Correlations with Geographic Parameters of Responsibilities

(From III/A-3: Geographic Parameters of Respondent's Responsibilities)

- a. Statistical correlations reveal that responding **international/global** companies (as compared to non-international/non-global companies) are significantly more likely to:
- Be responsible for:
 - Corporate communications (non-advertising related)
 - Corporate intranet
 - Corporate reputation
 - Corporate social responsibility oversight
 - Crisis management
 - Executive communications
 - Investor relations
 - Monitoring of and participation in digital media (the blogosphere, online social networking, and other online media)
 - Evaluate PR's effectiveness by using:
 - Content analysis of clips, influence on share of voice
 - Influence on stock performance
 - Total number of clips in "top tier" media
 - Report that the PR/communications function is **well integrated** with other departments
 - Allocate **higher** percentages of their total PR budgets to PR agency fees (when they do use PR agencies)
 - Describe their organizations as:
 - Having a **good external reputation** (versus a poor one)
 - **Successful** (versus unsuccessful)
- b. Statistical correlations reveal that responding **international/global** companies (as compared to non-international/non-global companies) are significantly less likely to:
- Describe their organizations as being **people-first** (versus profits-first)

The data suggest to us that:

Being international/global appears to be associated with a number of positive characteristics for the communications function, including (not surprisingly) broader responsibilities, more rigorous approaches to evaluation, greater organizational integration, etc. One can argue that such organizations became international/global due to various positive attributes such as strong management, sound strategy, scalable organizational structure, etc. Most organizations, however, are not international/global in scope and have no need to be in order to succeed. Ergo, practitioners might consider how they can otherwise achieve these attributes of international/global companies in their own organizations.

VII/C: Correlations with Public Relations Budgets

(From III/B-1: Total Average PR Budgets and Percentages of Budgets Allocated to Salaries)

Statistical correlations of responses from various questions reveal that companies with **larger PR budgets** are significantly more likely to:

- Report that the PR/Communications function is well integrated with other departments
- Use outside PR agencies
- Work with a significantly larger number of PR agencies (when they do use outside PR agencies)

The data suggest to us that:

*It is especially noteworthy that having a larger budget does not correlate in a positive (or negative) way with **any** of the indicators of communications success examined in GAP, i.e., having a better external reputation, a higher level of support from senior management, a greater extent to which reputation is factored into organizational decision-making, etc. This suggests that having a larger budget is **not** necessarily a **best practice**.*

VII/D: Correlations with Ratio of PR Budgets to Gross Revenue

(From III/B-3: Ratio of PR Budgets to Gross Revenues: PR/GR Ratio)

Statistical correlations of responses from various questions reveal that among the very largest organizations, organizations with **higher PR/GR ratios** compared to organizations with lower PR/GR ratios are significantly more likely to:

- Report that the C-Suite takes PR recommendations seriously
- Evaluate PR's effectiveness by using:
 - Content analysis of clips
 - Influence on share of voice
- Describe their organizations as:
 - **Ethical** (versus unethical)
 - **Proactive** (versus reactive)

The data suggest to us that:

Unlike PR Budget, PR/GR Ratio is a relative measure. It reflects what organizations spend on PR/Communications relative to their gross revenues, rather than simply the total amount spent. An organization can have a healthy PR/GR Ratio and still not spend as much on the communications function as a competitor. In this case, it is important to bear in mind that the inverse relationship is also true – if the C-Suite takes recommendations more seriously, the organization is more likely to have a higher PR/GR ratio. Ergo, the authors suggest that because a higher PR/GR Ratio correlates with greater attention paid to PR recommendations:

GAP Best Practice #1: Maintain a higher than average ratio of PR budget to gross revenue (GAP PR/GR Ratio).

** As previously noted, the authors believe that a sufficient body of GAP data now exists to define reliable PR/GR ratios for the largest organizations (i.e., those with annual gross revenue budgets of more than \$3.1B; see Section III, Table B-3). In time, they hope to establish similar metrics for smaller organizations.*

VII/E: Correlations with PR Function Reporting Lines

(From III/C-1: PR/Communication Function Reporting Lines)

- a. Statistical correlations reveal that among organizations in which PR/Communications **reports directly and exclusively to the C-Suite** (Chairperson, CEO, COO, etc.), respondents are significantly more likely to report that:
- Their reporting line is appropriate
 - They have **higher** PR/GR ratios
 - The C-Suite takes PR recommendations seriously
 - They enjoy substantially **higher** levels of support for the PR function from the C-Suite
 - PR and reputational considerations are factored into organizational strategic decision making and planning
 - Members of the PR and communications staff are invited to meetings dealing with important issues that may or may not have communications implications
 - They have very broad responsibilities, including:
 - Advertising of corporate image
 - Advertising of issues
 - Advertising of product
 - Community relations
 - Corporate communications (non-advertising)
 - Corporate external website
 - Corporate image
 - Corporate intranet
 - Crisis management
 - Government relations/lobbying
 - Investor relations
 - Issues management
 - Philanthropy
 - They evaluate PR's effectiveness by using:
 - Contribution to market share
 - Contribution to profitability
 - Contribution to sales

- Influence on corporate culture
 - Influence on employee attitudes/morale
 - Influence on stakeholder awareness
 - Influence on stakeholder opinions
- Their CEOs believe that organizational reputation contributes to organizational success
 - The communications functions within the organizations are **well integrated**
 - They describe their organizations as more:
 - **Democratic** (versus autocratic)
 - **People-first** (versus profits-first)
- b. Statistical correlations reveal that among organizations in which PR/Communications **reports directly and exclusively to marketing**, respondents are significantly more likely to report that:
- They have **smaller** PR staffs
 - PR/Communication receives substantially **lower** levels of support from the C-Suite
 - They had **larger positive** PR budget changes in the last fiscal year
 - They anticipate **higher positive** PR budget changes in the next fiscal year
 - They are more likely to evaluate PR's effectiveness by using:
 - Total number of clips
 - Total number of clips in "top tier" media
 - They describe their organizations as more:
 - **Proactive** (versus reactive)
 - Having a **good external reputation** (versus a poor one)
 - When they do work with PR agencies, they allocate a **higher** percentage of the total PR budget to PR agency fees

- c. Statistical correlations reveal that among organizations in which PR/Communications **reports directly and exclusively to marketing**, respondents are significantly less likely to report that:
- They have responsibility for:
 - Corporate image advertising
 - Issues advertising
 - Community relations
 - Employee/internal communications
 - Government relations/lobbying
 - Public affairs
 - They evaluate PR's effectiveness based on influence on stakeholder opinions
 - Their organizations are **people-first** (versus profits-first)
 - They believe their reporting line is appropriate
 - The C-Suite takes PR recommendations seriously
 - PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with important issues that may or may not have communications implications
 - PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with organizational strategic planning
- d. Statistical correlations reveal that among organizations in which PR/Communications **reports directly and exclusively to the head of a business or operating unit**, respondents are significantly less likely to report that:
- They believe their reporting line is appropriate
 - Their C-Suite takes PR recommendations seriously
 - The PR function receives support from the C-Suite
 - PR and reputational considerations are factored into organizational strategic decision making and planning
 - They are responsible for:
 - Corporate communications (non-advertising)
 - Corporate intranet
 - Corporate social responsibility oversight
 - Executive communications
 - Investor relations
 - Issues management
 - Monitoring and participation in the blogosphere and in other online media
 - Philanthropy

- They have **large** PR budgets.
- They evaluate PR's effectiveness by:
 - Using content analysis of clips
 - Contribution to market share
 - Influence on share of voice
 - Influence on stakeholder awareness
 - Influence on stockholder opinions
 - Influence on stock performance
 - Total number of clips in "top tier" media
- They describe their organizations as **long-term strategic** (versus short-term operational)

The data suggest to us that:

- a. *The numerous benefits of reporting directly and exclusively to the C-Suite have been recognized for a long time in the profession. However, the extent to which GAP V correlations (which are totally consistent with those of the previous four GAP studies) point out the many other positive attributes that are associated with C-Suite reporting clearly suggests this:*

GAP Best Practice #2: Report directly and exclusively to the C-Suite.

- b. *The attributes that are associated with reporting directly and exclusively to marketing, on the other hand, are mixed. Budgets are more likely to grow, perhaps because such companies are substantially more consumer-facing than others, and contributions made under the direction of marketing are seen as more vital. PR, however, may be significantly less engaged in providing services to the C-Suite, which may prove dangerous when broad organizational crises arise and the PR team is unable to respond with the kind of intimacy and expertise that is required in such times. However, combining the strategic benefits of C-Suite reporting with the financial benefits of reporting to marketing suggests that, in marketing and sales driven organizations, a more situational approach is appropriate, perhaps one in which PR reports directly and exclusively to the C-Suite, with a dotted line relationship with marketing:*

- c. *PR teams that report directly and exclusively to business or operating unit chiefs are among the least content, most neglected, underutilized, underfunded, and most detached from the higher levels of corporate reputational and image work. Nonetheless, there are numerous cases in which PR/Communications is rightfully tasked with providing high levels of support for operating or business units of large, complex organizations, and there is a significant degree of accountability to those units. In such cases the best model may be one in which PR reports directly and exclusively to the C-Suite, with dotted line relationships (including a good deal of accountability) in place between the heads of the units and those parts of the overall PR function having responsibility for support of those units.*

VII/F: Correlations with Senior Management Rankings for Contributions to Success

(From III/F-1, F-1a: Senior Management's Views and Rankings of Nine Functions' Contributions to Organizational Success)

Statistical correlations reveal that among organizations in which the C-Suite perceives PR/communications as **contributing significantly to organizational success** as gauged by how highly it is ranked relative to eight other functions, respondents are significantly more likely to:

- Report that their CEOs believe that organizational reputation contributes to organizational success
- Report that the C-Suite takes PR recommendations seriously
- Report that PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with important issues that may or may not have communications implications
- Report that PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with organizational strategic planning
- Report that the communications functions within the organizations are **well integrated**
- Report that the PR/communications function is **well integrated** with other departments
- Make use of data from other functions when evaluating PR activities
- Have responsibility for:
 - Community relations
 - Corporate reputation
 - Crisis management
 - Executive communications
 - Marketing PR/Product PR
 - Monitoring and participation in the blogosphere and in other online media
 - Public affairs
- Evaluate PR's effectiveness by using:
 - Ad equivalency of clips
 - Content analysis of clips
 - Contribution to market share
 - Contribution to profitability
 - Crisis avoidance/mitigation
 - Influence on corporate culture
 - Influence on corporate reputation
 - Influence on employee attitudes/morale

- Influence on share of voice
 - Influence on stakeholder awareness
 - Influence on stakeholder opinions
 - Total circulation
 - Total impressions
 - Total number of clips
 - Total number of clips in "top tier" media
- Describe their organizations as:
 - **More flexible** (versus rigid)
 - **More democratic** (versus autocratic)
 - **More people-first** (versus profits-first)
 - **More ethical** (versus unethical)
 - **More proactive** (versus reactive)
 - **More long-term strategic** (versus short-term operational)
 - **More successful** (versus unsuccessful)
 - Having a **good external reputation** (versus a poor one)

The data suggest to us that:

While it may seem self-evident that PR/Communications will thrive in organizations where it is seen as contributing more to success, a more careful look at the nature of these correlations is revealing. No mention is made of such traditional, tangible measures of success as larger budgets and/or staffs, while such intangible, professionally satisfying rewards as respect, broader engagement, greater integration, and having a better external reputation are plentiful. (One might also hypothesize that practitioners in such organizations enjoy greater financial rewards.) This is consistent with previously mentioned findings that larger budgets are not in themselves indicators of success, and suggests:

GAP Best Practice #3: Optimize the C-Suite's understanding of PR's current and potential contributions to the success of the organization as a whole.

VII/G: Correlations with Budgetary Responsibility for Corporate Social Responsibility

(From III/G-1: All Functions for which Respondents have Budgetary Responsibility and Their Rankings)

Statistical correlations reveal that organizations in which PR/Communications has **budgetary responsibility for corporate social responsibility** (CSR) are significantly more likely to report:

- **Larger** gross revenues
- **Larger** PR budgets
- **Larger** PR staffs
- Their CEOs believe that organizational reputation contributes to organizational success
- The C-Suite takes PR recommendations seriously
- **Higher** levels of support for the PR function from the C-Suite
- **Higher** frequencies with which PR and reputational considerations are factored into organizational strategic decision making and planning
- The PR/communications function is **well integrated** with other departments
- The communications functions within the organization are **well integrated**
- They make use of data from other functions when evaluating PR activities
- Responsibility for:
 - Community relations
 - Corporate communications (non-advertising)
 - Corporate ethics/ombudsman
 - Corporate external website
 - Corporate governance/standards
 - Corporate intranet
 - Corporate reputation
 - Crisis management
 - Employee/internal communications
 - Executive communications
 - Government relations/lobbying
 - Investor relations
 - Issues management
 - Monitoring of and participation in digital media (the blogosphere, online social networking, and other online media)
 - Philanthropy
 - Public affairs

- Their organizations are more **flexible** (versus rigid).

The data suggest to us that:

The informal hypothesis on which the addition of CSR to GAP V was based – that it would be an indicator of other positive attributes – has proven to be true. While those with responsibility for CSR are significantly more likely to work for larger organizations, it is extremely important to note that:

- *The positive attributes that are associated with CSR responsibility can be beneficial to the PR/Communications functions of almost all organizations*
- *CSR need not be solely the realm of the largest companies. Arguably, the “C” should be changed to an “O,” standing for Organizational. Organizational Social Responsibility (OSR) and OSR-like activities and values can be practiced by almost any organization, at almost any level, on almost any scale*
- *While the jury may still be out on the degree to which CSR actually contributes to bottom-line (financial) success, there is far less uncertainty concerning:*
 - *The increasing extent to which CSR is seen as a social obligation, irrespective (within reason) of bottom-line impact*
 - *Its pragmatic role as a reputational insurance policy against the worst outcomes of a crisis or other calamity*
 - *Its role as an internal motivator and morale builder*

Ergo, the authors suggest:

GAP Best Practice #4: Establish an effective social responsibility strategy for your organization.

*While some might argue that this is self-evident (“of course organizations that are open to CSR strategies will be better environments for PR/Communications”), the authors counter that the key learning here applies to organizations having **less** fertile PR/Communications environments. Arguably, a key responsibility of PR/Communications is to affect organizational culture and strategy in a way that will facilitate the achievement of organizational goals, rather than simply accept the status quo. That given, in cases where CSR can contribute to the achievement of those goals, it is in PR/Communication’s best interests to drive change and institute such efforts, perhaps creating a more hospitable environment for its own activities in the process.*

VII/H: Correlations with Budgetary Responsibility for Digital Media

(From III/G-1: All Functions for which Respondents have Budgetary Responsibility and Their Rankings)

Statistical correlations reveal that organizations in which PR/Communications has **budgetary responsibility for digital media** (i.e., monitoring of and/or participation in social networks, blogosphere, etc.) are significantly more likely to report:

- **Larger** gross revenues
- **Larger** PR budgets
- **Larger** PR/Communications staffs
- **More serious** consideration of PR recommendations by the C-Suite
- **Higher** levels of support for the PR function from the C-Suite
- **Greater** CEO belief that organizational reputation contributes to organizational success
- **Higher** frequencies with which PR and reputational considerations are factored into organizational strategic decision making and planning
- PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with important issues that may or may not have communications implications
- Use of data from other functions when evaluating your PR activities
- Communications functions that are **well integrated** with other departments
- Responsibility for:
 - Corporate communications (non-advertising)
 - Corporate ethics/ombudsman
 - Corporate external website
 - Corporate intranet
 - Corporate reputation
 - Corporate social responsibility oversight
 - Crisis management
 - Executive communications
 - Government relations/lobbying
 - Investor relations
 - Issues management
 - Philanthropy

- PR's effectiveness evaluated by using:
 - Ad equivalency of clips
 - Content analysis of clips
 - Contribution to market share
 - Contribution to sales
 - Crisis avoidance/mitigation
 - Influence on corporate culture
 - Influence on corporate reputation
 - Influence on employee attitudes/morale
 - Influence on share of voice
 - Influence on stakeholder awareness
 - Influence on stakeholder opinions
 - Influence on stock performance
 - Total circulation
 - Total impressions
 - Total number of clips
 - Total number of clips in "top tier" media

***The data suggest to us that:** As with CSR, the informal hypothesis on which the addition to GAP V of digital media responsibility was based – that it would be an indicator of other positive attributes – has proven to be true. While those with responsibility for digital media are significantly more likely to work for larger organizations, it is extremely important to note that:*

- *The positive attributes that are associated with such responsibility can be beneficial to the PR/Communications functions of almost all organizations.*
- *The cost of entry into the digital media realm is far lower than are the costs of many more traditional tools, making digital media easily accessible to organizations of virtually all sizes and types.*
- *Although the data on the current usage of different types of digital media vary greatly based on different demographic and psychographic factors, it is an unarguable fact that use of these tools is growing exponentially. No doubt, they will become increasingly dominant as today's younger, early adopter generations grow older.*

Ergo, the authors suggest:

GAP Best Practice #5: Establish an effective digital-media strategy for your organization.

As with CSR, some might argue that it is only natural that progressive, communications minded organizations are more likely to adopt digital media strategies. Again, the authors counter that the key learning here applies to organizations having less progressive attitudes toward communication. Given that a key responsibility of PR/Communications is to affect organizational culture and strategy in a way that will facilitate the achievement of organizational goals, rather than simply accept the status quo, the adoption of a digital media strategy can serve as a culture changer, possibly leading to other positive developments.

VII/I: Correlations with Budgetary Responsibility for Issues Management

(From III/G-1: All Functions for which Respondents have Budgetary Responsibility and Their Rankings)

Statistical correlations reveal that among organizations in which PR/Communications has **direct budgetary responsibility for issues management**, respondents are significantly more likely to report:

- **Larger** gross revenues
- **Larger** PR budgets
- **Larger** PR/Communications staffs
- The C-Suite takes PR recommendations seriously
- **Higher** levels of support for the PR function from the C-Suite
- Their CEOs believe that organizational reputation contributes to organizational success
- PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with important issues that may or may not have communications implications
- PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with organizational strategic planning
- They make use of data from other functions when evaluating PR activities
- The communications functions within the organizations are well integrated
- The PR/Communications function is well integrated with other departments
- Having responsibility for:
 - Advertising of issues
 - Community relations
 - Corporate communications (non-advertising)
 - Corporate ethics/ombudsman
 - Corporate external website
 - Corporate intranet
 - Corporate intranet
 - Corporate reputation
 - Corporate social responsibility oversight
 - Crisis management
 - Employee/internal communications
 - Executive communications
 - Government relations/lobbying
 - Investor relations
 - Issues management

- Monitoring of and participation in digital media (the blogosphere, online social networking, and other online media)
- Philanthropy
- Public affairs

- Evaluating PR's effectiveness by using:
 - Content analysis of clips
 - Crisis avoidance/mitigation
 - Influence on corporate culture
 - Influence on corporate reputation
 - Influence on employee attitudes/morale
 - Influence on share of voice
 - Influence on stakeholder awareness
 - Influence on stakeholder opinions
 - Influence on stock performance
 - Total number of clips in "top tier" media

- Their organizations are perceived as **long-term strategic** (versus short-term operational)

***The data suggest to us that:** While those with responsibility for issues management are significantly more likely to work for larger organizations, it is extremely important to note that:*

- a. *The issues management function (i.e., the process by which organizations monitor, pre-empt, or react to external issues affecting their ability to achieve their goals) has great relevance to organizations of all sizes and types.*
- b. *Depending on the scope of the organization, the issues management function can be very simple or very complex. Although it appears to be more common among larger organizations, smaller ones may be more adaptable to and successful at it, given their less complex environments.*
- c. *In its simpler forms (e.g., those forms of greatest relevance to smaller organizations), it can be adopted with a relatively small investment in time and money.*
- d. *The positive attributes that are associated with such responsibility can be beneficial to the PR/Communications functions of almost all organizations.*

Ergo, the authors suggest:

GAP Best Practice #6: Establish an effective issues-management strategy for your organization.

VII/J: Correlations with Functional Integration

(From III/H-1: Integration of Communication Function[s])

- a. Statistical correlations reveal that respondents who report that the various parts of the communications function (i.e. internal communication, corporate communication, product support, community relations, etc.) are well integrated, are also significantly more likely to report:
- Their reporting line is appropriate
 - They report to the C-Suite
 - Their CEOs believe that organizational reputation contributes to organizational success
 - The C-Suite takes PR recommendations seriously
 - PR and reputational considerations are more frequently factored into organizational strategic decision making and planning
 - PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with organizational strategic planning
 - PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with important issues that may or may not have communications implications
 - The PR/Communications function is well integrated with other departments
 - They make use of data from other functions when evaluating PR activities
 - Having responsibility for:
 - Advertising of products
 - Corporate governance/standards
 - Government relations/lobbying
 - Investor relations
 - Monitoring and participation in online social networking and in other online media
 - Evaluating PR's effectiveness by using:
 - Content analysis of clips
 - Contribution to market share
 - Contribution to profitability
 - Contribution to sales
 - Crisis avoidance/mitigation
 - Influence on corporate culture
 - Influence on corporate reputation
 - Influence on employee attitudes/morale

- Influence on share of voice
 - Influence on stakeholder awareness
 - Influence on stakeholder opinions
- Having CEOs who believe that the methods used to evaluate PR are adequate
 - Their organizations can be described as being more:
 - **Successful** (versus unsuccessful)
 - **Flexible** (versus rigid)
 - **Democratic** (versus autocratic)
 - **People-first** (versus profits-first)
 - **Ethical** (versus unethical)
 - **Proactive** (versus reactive)
 - **Long-term strategic** (versus short-term operational)
 - Having a **good external reputation** (versus a poor one)
- b. Statistical correlations of responses from various questions reveal that respondents who report that the communications function is well integrated *with other parts of the organization* (i.e. marketing, finance, law, operations, etc.) are also significantly more likely to report:
- They believe their reporting line is appropriate
 - Their CEOs believe that organizational reputation contributes to organizational success
 - The C-Suite takes PR recommendations seriously
 - They receive **higher** levels of support from the C-Suite
 - PR and reputational considerations are factored into organizational strategic decision making and planning
 - PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with organizational strategic planning
 - PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with important issues that may or may not have communications implications
 - They anticipate **larger** PR budget changes in the next fiscal year
 - They make use of data from other functions when evaluating PR activities
 - They have responsibility for:
 - Advertising of products
 - Corporate image
 - Government relations/lobbying
 - Investor relations

- They evaluate PR's effectiveness by using:
 - Ad equivalency of clips
 - Content analysis of clips
 - Contribution to market share
 - Contribution to profitability
 - Contribution to sales
 - Crisis avoidance/mitigation
 - Influence on corporate culture
 - Influence on corporate reputation
 - Influence on employee attitudes/morale
 - Influence on share of voice
 - Influence on stakeholder awareness
 - Influence on stakeholder opinions
 - Influence on stock performance
 - Total circulation
 - Total impressions
 - Total number of clips in "top tier" media

- Their CEOs believe that the methods used to evaluate PR are adequate
- Their organizations are more:
 - **Flexible** (versus rigid)
 - **Democratic** (versus autocratic)
 - **People-first** (versus profits-first)
 - **Ethical** (versus unethical)
 - **Proactive** (versus reactive)
 - **Long-term strategic** (versus short-term operational)
 - **Successful** (versus unsuccessful)

- Their organizations enjoy **good external reputations** (versus poor ones)

The data suggest to us that:

- a. Having a PR/Communications function that is well integrated, both within itself and with other organizational functions (i.e., marketing, HR, finance, operations, etc.), is associated with many other positive attributes that can be beneficial to organizations of all types and sizes.*
- b. Because of the extent to which success at communications depends on optimal communications with other functions, PR/Communications should assume the role of champion in breaking down organizational silos.*
- c. The role of silo-busting champion, if successfully undertaken, will garner additional respect and support for the function.*

Ergo, the authors suggest:

GAP Best Practice #7: Optimize integration and coordination within the PR/Communications function, and between it and other organizational functions.

VII/K: Descriptions of Organization as a Whole

(From III/H-2 and H-2a: Organizational Description)

In the following pages, there appears a series of correlations based on respondents' descriptions of their organizations in their entirety. These are based on a set of questions in which they were asked to describe their organizational environments by selecting a number from 1 to 7 to express their organization's place on the following descriptive scales:

Having a poor external reputation – Having a good external reputation
Unethical – Ethical
Short-term operational – Long-term strategic
Reactive – Proactive
Rigid – Flexible
Autocratic – Democratic
Profits-first – People-first
Unsuccessful – Successful

- a. Statistical correlations reveal that respondents who describe their organizations as having **“a good external reputation,”** as compared with **“a poor external reputation,”** are significantly more likely to report that:
- The C-Suite takes PR recommendations seriously
 - PR and reputational considerations are more frequently factored into organizational strategic decision making and planning
 - Their CEOs believe that organizational reputation contributes to organizational success
 - The communications functions within the organization are well integrated
 - The PR/Communications function is well integrated with other departments
 - **Higher** percentages of their PR budgets are allocated to PR agency fees (among those using PR agencies)
 - PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with organizational strategic planning
 - Their CEOs believe that the methods used to evaluate PR are adequate
 - Their organizations are more:
 - **Flexible** (versus rigid)
 - **Democratic** (versus autocratic)
 - **People-first** (versus profits-first)
 - **Ethical** (versus unethical)
 - **Proactive** (versus reactive)
 - **Long-term strategic** (versus short-term operational)
 - **Successful** (versus unsuccessful)

- b. Statistical correlations reveal that respondents who describe their organizations as being “**ethical**” rather than “**unethical**” are significantly more likely to report that:
- The C-Suite takes PR recommendations seriously
 - PR and reputational considerations are more frequently factored into organizational strategic decision making and planning
 - Their CEOs believe that organizational reputation contributes to organizational success
 - The communications functions within the organization are well integrated
 - The PR/Communications function is well integrated with other departments
 - PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with organizational strategic planning
 - Their reporting line is appropriate
 - They have significantly **higher** levels of support for the PR function from the C-Suite
 - PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with important issues that may or may not have communications implications
 - They have responsibility for:
 - Corporate communications (non-advertising)
 - Corporate intranet
 - Corporate reputation management
 - Employee/internal communication
 - Executive communication
 - Their CEOs believe that the methods used to evaluate PR are adequate
 - They are more likely to describe their organizations as:
 - **Flexible** (versus rigid)
 - **Democratic** (versus autocratic)
 - **People-first** (versus profits-first)
 - **Proactive** (versus reactive)
 - **Long-term strategic** (versus short-term operational)
 - **Successful** (versus unsuccessful)
 - Having a **good external reputation** (versus a poor one)

- c. Statistical correlations reveal that respondents who describe their organizations as being “**long-term strategic,**” as compared with those described as “**short-term operational,**” are significantly more likely to report that:
- The C-Suite takes PR recommendations seriously
 - PR and reputational considerations are more frequently factored into organizational strategic decision making and planning
 - Their CEOs believe that organizational reputation contributes to organizational success
 - The communications functions within the organization are well integrated
 - The PR/Communications function is well integrated with other departments
 - PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with organizational strategic planning
 - There are significantly **higher** levels of support for the PR function from the C-Suite
 - PR/communications is invited to meetings dealing with important issues that may or may not have communications implications
 - They evaluate PR's effectiveness by using:
 - Crisis avoidance/mitigation
 - Influence on corporate reputation
 - Influence on employee attitudes/morale
 - Influence on share of voice
 - Influence on stakeholder awareness
 - Influence on stakeholder opinions
 - They are more likely to describe their organizations as:
 - **Flexible** (versus rigid)
 - **Democratic** (versus autocratic)
 - **People-first** (versus profits-first)
 - **Ethical** (versus unethical)
 - **Proactive** (versus reactive)
 - **Successful** (versus unsuccessful)
 - Having a **good external reputation** (versus a poor one)
 - They have responsibility for issues management and philanthropy

- d. Statistical correlations reveal that respondents who describe their organizations as being “**proactive,**” rather than “**reactive,**” are significantly more likely to report that:
- The C-Suite takes PR recommendations seriously
 - PR and reputational considerations are more frequently factored into organizational strategic decision making and planning
 - Their CEOs believe that organizational reputation contributes to organizational success
 - The communications functions within the organization are well integrated
 - The PR/Communications function is well integrated with other departments
 - PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with organizational strategic planning
 - PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with important issues that may or may not have communications implications
 - Their reporting line is appropriate
 - They have **higher** levels of support for the PR function from the C-Suite
 - They have responsibility for:
 - Corporate ethics/ombudsman
 - Community relations
 - Crisis management
 - Marketing PR/Product PR
 - They have received **larger** increases in their PR budgets in the last fiscal year
 - They evaluate PR's effectiveness by using:
 - Contribution to market share
 - Contribution to profitability
 - Influence on corporate culture
 - Influence on corporate reputation
 - Influence on employee attitudes/morale
 - Influence on share of voice
 - Influence on stakeholder awareness
 - Influence on stakeholder opinions
 - Their CEOs believe that the methods used to evaluate PR are adequate

- They are more likely to describe their organizations as:
 - **Flexible** (versus rigid)
 - **Democratic** (versus autocratic)
 - **People-first** (versus profits-first)
 - **Ethical** (versus unethical)
 - **Long-term strategic** (versus short-term operational)
 - **Successful** (versus unsuccessful)
 - Having a **good external reputation** (versus a poor one)

- e. Statistical correlations of responses from various questions reveal that respondents who describe their organizations as being **“flexible,” rather than “rigid,”** are significantly more likely to report that:
 - The C-Suite takes PR recommendations seriously
 - PR and reputational considerations are factored into organizational strategic decision making and planning
 - Their CEOs believe that organizational reputation contributes to organizational success
 - The communications functions within the organization are well integrated
 - The PR/Communications function is well integrated with other departments
 - PR/Communications is invited to meetings dealing with organizational strategic planning
 - They have **higher** levels of support for the PR function from the C-Suite
 - PR is invited to meetings dealing with important issues that may or may not have communications implications
 - They have responsibility for:
 - Corporate ethics/ombudsman
 - Corporate external website
 - Corporate governance/standards
 - Corporate social responsibility oversight
 - Executive communications
 - Investor relations
 - Marketing PR/Product PR
 - Public affairs

 - They have received significantly **higher** increases in their PR budgets in the last fiscal year

- They evaluate PR's effectiveness by using:
 - Contribution to market share
 - Contribution to profitability
 - Contribution to sales
 - Influence on corporate culture
 - Influence on corporate reputation
 - Influence on employee attitudes/morale
 - Influence on share of voice
 - Influence on stakeholder awareness
 - Influence on stakeholder opinions
 - Total circulation
 - Total impressions
 - Total number of clips in "top tier" media

- They are more likely to describe their organizations as:
 - **Democratic** (versus autocratic)
 - **People-first** (versus profits-first)
 - **Ethical** (versus unethical)
 - **Long-term strategic** (versus short-term operational)
 - **Proactive** (versus reactive)
 - **Successful** (versus unsuccessful)
 - Having a **good external reputation** (versus a poor one)

The data suggest to us that:

a. *It is noteworthy that each of the following five positive attributes correlates with all of the other four:*

- *Good external reputation*
- *Ethical*
- *Long-term strategic*
- *Proactive*
- *Flexible*

b. Moreover, it is extremely noteworthy that those five attributes also correlate with an important sixth attribute: **successful**

In other words, a respondent who indicated that his organization was more “successful” was significantly more likely to give more positive scores for the other five attributes as well. This suggests that “successful” organizations enjoy “good external reputations” because they practice patterns of positive behaviors (i.e., ethical, strategic, proactive, and flexible) that are indicators of, and contributors to, their success.

c. Equally noteworthy is the fact that all five of the positive attributes mentioned above correlate with six additional positive attributed drawn from responses to other questions:

- The C-Suite takes PR recommendations seriously
- PR and reputational considerations are more frequently factored into organizational strategic decision making and planning
- Their CEOs believe that organizational reputation contributes to organizational success
- The PR/Communications functions within the organization are well integrated
- The PR/Communications function is well integrated with other departments

This suggests that in “successful” organizations there exists a pattern consisting of six additional positive behaviors that are indicators of, and contributors to, their success.

Given these data en toto, the authors suggest:

GAP Best Practice #8: Encourage highly ethical practices across the organization, beginning with communication.

GAP Best Practice #9: Encourage the organization-wide adoption of a long-term strategic point of view, beginning with communication.

GAP Best Practice #10: Encourage the organization-wide adoption of a proactive mindset, beginning with communication.

GAP Best Practice #11: Encourage the organization-wide adoption of a flexible mindset, beginning with communication.

GAP Best Practice #12: Optimize the integration of PR and reputational considerations into top-level organizational strategies.

GAP Best Practice #13: Measurably contribute to organizational success.

GAP BEST PRACTICES: RECAP

GAP Best Practice #1: Maintain a higher than average ratio of PR budget to gross revenue (GAP PR/GR Ratio).

GAP Best Practice #2: Report directly and exclusively to the C-Suite.

GAP Best Practice #3: Optimize the C-Suite's understanding of PR's current and potential contributions to the success of the organization as a whole.

GAP Best Practice #4: Establish an effective social responsibility strategy for your organization.

GAP Best Practice #5: Establish an effective digital-media strategy for your organization.

GAP Best Practice #6: Establish an effective issues-management strategy for your organization.

GAP Best Practice #7: Optimize integration and coordination within the PR/Communications function, and between it and other organizational functions.

GAP Best Practice #8: Encourage highly ethical practices across the organization, beginning with communication.

GAP Best Practice #9: Encourage the organization-wide adoption of a long-term strategic point of view, beginning with communication.

GAP Best Practice #10: Encourage the organization-wide adoption of a proactive mindset, beginning with communication.

GAP Best Practice #11: Encourage the organization-wide adoption of a flexible mindset, beginning with communication.

GAP Best Practice #12: Optimize the integration of PR and reputational considerations into top-level organizational strategies.

GAP Best Practice #13: Measurably contribute to organizational success.