



**FOURTH ANNUAL PUBLIC RELATIONS
GENERALLY ACCEPTED PRACTICES (G.A.P.)
STUDY
(2005 DATA)**

GAP IV

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

By

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GAP IV STUDY

I. INTRODUCTION: GOALS, METHODOLOGY, AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This fourth annual GAP 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 on an ongoing basis:

Avery Dennison

General Motors

Home Depot

Lohan Media

Nike

Nissan Motors America

Raytheon

Weber Shandwick Worldwide

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. Provide PR practitioners with practical, applied research that will be of immediate use to them, thereby helping them improve their effectiveness and roles within their organizations.
2. Ascertain current Generally Accepted Practices (GAPs) and explore “Best Practices” for PR.
3. Identify gaps in knowledge requiring further investigation.
4. Assess the overall health and strength of the public relations profession.
5. Identify trends and emerging issues based on year-over-year comparisons of GAP data.

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Objectives (cont'd)

6. Assess the perceived importance of the PR function relative to other organization functions.
7. Determine how organizations perceive the use and value of PR, organize their in-house PR departments, and how they work with external public relations agencies.

Comments on response:

As a result of several mailings to approximately 8500 organizations, a total of 496 senior level practitioners (approximately 6%) completed all or most of the 34-question GAP III survey, either on line or in hard copy form. (This is an increase of 25% over the GAP III response rate.) From a statistical standpoint the pool of respondents constitute 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 2005, and analyzed during the first quarter of 2006. 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.

Comments on Changes in Content:

1. In prior versions of GAP, attempts were made to compare the practices of companies included among Fortune Magazine's list of Most Admired Companies with those of all other respondents. However, several years of study indicated that there were insufficient differences between the Most Admired Companies and all others, at least insofar as PR practices were concerned, to warrant further comparison.
2. The authors recognize that practitioners are primarily interested in data that is the most relevant to their own situations and organizations. Ergo, for the first time in the GAP series, GAP IV 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.

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 III, and in some cases, GAPs I and II as well.

Section IV: An explicit comparison between public and private companies, including year-over-year changes from previous GAPs.

Section V: An explicit analysis of government agencies and not-for-profit organizations.

Section VI: An explicit analysis of respondents from three specific industry categories: Health Care, Technology, and Manufacturing.

Availability:

As a service to the profession, the USC Annenberg Strategic Public Relations Center has made the entire GAP IV 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.

Information:

For information on the Strategic Public Relations Center, including how your organization can help support its work, contact Jerry Swerling (swerling@usc.edu).