

379
N81
NO, 5395

AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TELEVISION
NEWS SELECTION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS TECHNIQUES

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Linda Resnik, B. J.

Denton, Texas

August, 1977

Star

Resnik, Linda, An Analysis of the Relationship Between Television News Selection and Public Relations Techniques. Master of Arts (Journalism), August, 1977, 61 pp., 9 tables, bibliography, 48 titles.

The problem is to determine if identifiable factors influence selection of soft news for coverage on television newscasts. Data were obtained from news releases, newscast scripts, and interviews with participating practitioners and editors.

Chapter I presents the problem; Chapter II contains an analysis of news releases submitted to editors; Chapter III presents analysis of techniques and attitudes of practitioners and editors; Chapter IV presents conclusions and guidelines.

The study indicated practitioners could influence selection of their items through attention to certain factors and techniques: elements of newsworthiness, personal contact, method of item dissemination, quantity of items submitted, and professionalism and credibility.

Specific guidelines were developed for practitioners to follow in dealing with television news editors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.	ii
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION.	1
Statement of the Problem	
Purpose of the Study	
Definition of Terms	
Hypotheses	
Review of the Literature	
Justification	
Limitations	
Methodology	
Organization	
II. ANALYSIS OF NEWS ITEMS.	15
III. ANALYSIS OF ITEM SELECTION PROCESSES OF EDITORS AND SUBMISSION TECHNIQUES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS.	22
News Item Selection by Editors	
Distribution of Selected News Items	
Patterns of Submission by Practitioners	
Techniques of Practitioners	
Relationship Between News Media and Public Relations	
IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	43
Summary	
Conclusions	
Guidelines	
Recommendations for Future Study	
APPENDIX A.	53
APPENDIX B.	54
APPENDIX C.	56
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	58

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Frequency of Appearance and Selection of News Element Categories in Stories	16
II. Use of Elements	20
III. News Item Coverage by Station	23
IV. Frequency of Appearance and Selection of Element Combinations by Company	25
V. Practitioners' Oral Rankings of News Elements Compared to Their Use of Elements.	30
VI. Editors' Rankings and Actual Selection of Elements.	32
VII. Editors' Rankings and Percentage Selection of Elements	33
VIII. Relationship Between Personal Contact and News Item Selection	34
IX. Methods of Dissemination of News Items.	36

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Each of the three network-affiliated commercial television stations in the Dallas-Fort Worth market airs two evening newscasts each day of the week, including Saturdays and Sundays. Each newscast has an average of less than fifteen minutes available for news coverage (thirty-minute time slot, minus the time allotted to weather, sports, and commercials). In the available time, the news staff is expected to present the day's major local news events and, in some cases, national and international events. Individual station policy determines the ratio in which local news and news from other areas will be mixed. Station policy determines the ratio in which hard news and soft news will be covered and reported.

Depending on the nature of an event, the television station has a number of sources from which it may receive its information or account of a news story: staff reporter, newspaper article, wire service dispatch, police radio, informer, network newscast, news release, and public relations practitioner, among others.

Public relations practitioners seek television news time to publicize their companies and to enhance the public image of their employers. Because news time is severely limited,

the practitioners compete with each other and against the day's hard news events for coverage.

No simple answer explains how the successful practitioner secures air time for his company or organization. Tactics employed by practitioners are probably as distinctive and diverse as the practitioners themselves. One tool, however, is widely accepted as a way of keeping news personnel informed of a company's activities: the news release. Once the practitioner has supplied the basic information concerning an event or activity the company deems newsworthy, the decision for coverage is in the hands of the television news personnel.

The news release is so widely accepted, however, that hundreds of them arrive at the television news desks of the three network affiliates in Dallas-Fort Worth each week.

Statement of the Problem

How, if at all, can a public relations practitioner execute his duties to improve the possibilities of his news items being selected for coverage on television newscasts? Six elements of news are often cited by textbook writers and researchers as important factors in the selection of an item for television coverage: impact, conflict, prominence, proximity, timeliness, and visual qualities.¹ Can the inclusion

¹James K. Buckalew, "News Elements and Selection by Television News Editors," Journal of Broadcasting, XIV (Winter, 1969-70), 48.

of these elements or any combination of the elements, or other techniques of practitioners, influence television coverage?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine why some publicity stories received coverage and others did not. Once this determination was made, criteria for public relations practitioners in dealing with television news desks were developed. Characteristics of public relations practitioners and their news items that did and did not receive coverage were identified. Through an analysis of the news items according to their news elements and the personal techniques of the public relations practitioner (i.e., the use of telephone calls to the news people, personal visits to the newsroom, and social meetings), guidelines for success in soft news placement were sought. The analysis determined if the use of a story was dependent upon (a) the use of the news elements, (b) the practitioner's personal style, or (c) a combination of the two. The guidelines included favorable personality characteristics of the public relations practitioner as a news source, and effective techniques in the presentation of items for publicity purposes.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, public relations practitioner was defined as a person identified by a company or

organization to serve as the primary contact for matters and relationships with the news media. The practitioner's corporate or organizational title was not relevant; the function was.

Soft news and publicity were used interchangeably to refer to news copy that came to the attention of the news operation through a public relations practitioner. It was differentiated from hard news, news involving a spontaneous action or conflict. Stories that fell within the domain of sportscasters and weathermen were not considered news stories. Soft news was presented to the news personnel either in writing or orally.

News release referred to items submitted to the editors in writing, as well as to items delivered orally to the editors.

In the three television stations involved in this study, virtually all day-to-day decisions on news story coverage were made by the assignments editors. The assignments editors, also referred to as editors, were responsible for surveying all story possibilities for a given day and deciding which stories would be covered.

The six news elements cited were defined as follows:

Impact--dealing with matters likely to have a direct effect on a large portion of the audience.

Conflict--involving verbal or physical clashes between principals of the story, or spontaneous action.

Prominence--involving persons or institutions that, by themselves, maintain a high recognition factor among the audience.

Proximity--dealing with people or events specifically within the station's coverage area.

Timeliness--dealing with events announced in advance, allowing coverage at the time of their occurrence; or new leads to previously covered stories; or new stories or ideas not previously used by the news media.

Visual qualities--stories or items obviously adaptable to the television medium. Stories normally considered human interest often fall into this category to the total exclusion of the other categories.

Hypotheses

In two popular public relations textbooks, Canfield and Cutlip and Center indicated that the personal relationship of a public relations practitioner with the news media was of utmost importance, possibly more so than adherence to any set of news elements. Canfield said the "establishment of good working relationships with editors, reporters, cameramen . . . are essential in securing good publicity coverage."² Cutlip and Center agreed, noting that a news

²Bertrand R. Canfield, Public Relations, 5th ed. (Homewood, Ill., 1968), p. 450.

source in good standing with a news medium manager had a better chance of getting coverage.³

Two hypotheses were considered in this study.

1. The incorporation of certain news elements into a news item will not increase the probability of selection for television coverage.

2. Personal techniques of public relations practitioners do not play a significant role in determining whether a news item is used.

Review of the Literature

Most of the research conducted to date on the selection of news has dealt with newspapers and their use of hard news and wire service dispatches. Studies pertaining to publicity or soft news have emphasized the output of news by a company or organization rather than the selection and use of news by the news media. Public relations practitioners, as sources of news for local television newscasts, have been virtually ignored.

Buckalew conducted a study to determine what factors influence the decisions of television news editors in their selection processes for all coverage on television news.⁴ He related the results to the characteristics of the editors

³Scott M. Cutlip and Allen H. Center, Effective Public Relations, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1971), p. 407.

⁴Buckalew, op. cit., pp. 47-54.

and their situations. He combined all sources of input to find favorable news factor combinations, and analyzed the use of the combinations in terms of market size and editors' backgrounds. The study undertaken here used Buckalew's news factors, but the data were analyzed in relation to the source and content.

Harless studied the reasons incoming press releases to a local television news desk were rejected.⁵ He found the main reasons items were not used were that they lacked a local angle or that they were outdated. Harless' study touched upon the information sought in this study, although his was concerned with reasons for rejection rather than for selection.

Normoyle found in a survey of 500 newspaper editors (250 dailies, 250 weeklies) that more than one half of the respondents appreciated an occasional personal visit by a news source, but they indicated that friendship with a news source would have no effect on their news judgment and selection.⁶

In a study of extension agent contact with Minnesota community newspaper editors, Tichenor, Olien, and Donohue

⁵James D. Harless, "Mail Call: A Case Study of a Broadcast News Gatekeeper," Journalism Quarterly, LI (Spring, 1974), 87-90.

⁶John Normoyle, "'Contacts' in Public Relations Work: A Survey of Editors' Opinions," Public Relations Journal, XV (October, 1959), 24-28.

were unable to find any advantage in news placement in the newspapers when the agents had face-to-face contact with the editors or reporters.⁷

Poorman conducted an informal survey of the staffs of eight large metropolitan newspapers to determine what the news people believed was "wrong with public relations."⁸ Two things Poorman found were that public relations practitioners made too many telephone calls to see if the editor had received a news release and that the practitioners visited the newsroom uninvited and unannounced too often.

A thorough search of the Public Relations Journal, Journalism Quarterly, and Public Opinion Quarterly, as well as a number of major indexes and bibliographies that include major publications in the fields of journalism, public relations, and communication (including Public Relations Quarterly), provided a great deal of background information reflected in this study; but the search did not uncover any other study directly relevant to the one undertaken.

Justification

Adherence to the guidelines developed in this study will help public relations practitioners design their publicity

⁷Phillip J. Tichenor, Clarice N. Olien and George A. Donohue, "Predicting a Source's Success in Placing News in the Media," Journalism Quarterly, XLIV (Spring, 1967), 32-42.

⁸Paul Poorman, "Public Relations--The Newsmen's View," Public Relations Journal, XXX (March, 1974), 14.

packages to the needs and desires of television news personnel. The three assignments editors involved in this study agreed that a major problem in their dealings with public relations practitioners was the overabundance of unusable material they received. They said that if news releases and story ideas conformed to certain guidelines, a greater degree of successful placement would be realized. When asked what the guidelines were, the editors agreed, in individual conversations, that they knew them only when they saw them. This study sought to identify those guidelines.

Limitations

Six news elements have been cited as important factors in the selection of stories for television coverage. In this study, conflict was eliminated as a necessary element of newsworthiness because of the general lack of physical and verbal clashes in news releases and public relations news items. The remaining five news elements do have relevance to soft news.

Since this study was concerned with the factors leading to news selection, rather than the quantity of news used, no attempt was made to account for slow news days, days on which hard news did not develop at an expected rate. Whether a day was a good or bad news day was not significant in determining which elements in story ideas influenced news coverage.

For the purpose of this study, coverage of a news item was the only on-air determination made. The interest was on

why the story was selected, not on how much time was allotted to it or where it was placed in the newscast. The newsworthiness of an item was judged by how it was categorized in accordance with the five news elements.

The two independent television stations in the Dallas-Fort Worth market and the Public Broadcasting System outlet were excluded from the study because they did not have the news budgets, the network news support, the on-air time, or the news commitments of the other stations. Consequently, their attitudes in news selection were not equal or similar to the network affiliates.

In selecting the public relations practitioners involved, employees of public relations agencies were not considered. The attempt of this study was to define a relationship among product or service, public relations practitioner, and news media. Employees of public relations agencies generally have too many clients at any given time to be able to isolate a personal influence on a single product or service.

Ten practitioners were used in the study. The three editors involved indicated in informal conversations that they would select practitioners who regularly supplied material.⁹ The editors agreed that any pattern in their news selection processes would be discernible through the materials

⁹Interviews with Doug Adams, KXAS-TV, May 11, 1976; Buster McGregor, KDFW-TV, May 6, 1976; and Bert Shipp, WFAA-TV, May 11, 1976, Dallas, Texas.

of the ten practitioners. This method virtually guaranteed the selection of companies with a high visibility factor in the Dallas-Fort Worth market.

An eight-week study period in late summer was used. The eight-week period was considered sufficient time to identify a pattern in the editors' news selection. They agreed that summer vacations of the public relations practitioners would not interfere with the study because such periods probably would be covered with material prepared in advance or by aides in the practitioners' offices. Likewise, the editors did not believe that slow news days in the summer months would affect their selection. They agreed that more news releases might be used during the summer, but that the selection process would remain the same.

KXAS-TV, the National Broadcasting Company affiliate in the Dallas-Fort Worth market, is based in Fort Worth, but maintains a Dallas news bureau. Since the other two stations in the study were based in Dallas, the Dallas office of KXAS was used. This allowed a greater probability of consensus by the editors in selecting the practitioners to be involved.

Methodology

In April, 1976, each of the assignments editors of the three commercial network affiliates in Dallas (using the Dallas office of KXAS-TV) supplied a list of public relations practitioners from whom they often received information. The editors were asked to consider a broad range of commercial

and nonprofit organizations and companies, although no value judgments concerning the practitioners' abilities were desired. All practitioners who appeared on at least two of the lists were considered for the study. All unduplicated names were submitted to the editors. They were asked to select half of the names on the list. Again, all those duplicated by at least two of the editors were considered for the study. This same process was repeated a third time, when twelve names had been identified.

Each of the twelve public relations practitioners on the final list was contacted by telephone in May, 1976, and informed of the project. Two refused to participate, leaving the ten considered necessary for the project (Appendix A). Their agreement to participate in the study was partially based on the assurance that they would not be identified in any way in the analysis of data.

The participants agreed to supply copies of all news items received by one or more of the three television stations during the eight-week period from August 1 through September 25, 1976. They agreed to keep a diary of all personal contacts (telephone calls, personal visits, chance meetings, and social engagements) with news personnel at the three stations. The diary was to include the name of the person contacted, the news item discussed (if any), and the circumstances through which the contact was made.

During the eight-week study period, all news releases were coded according to the five news elements. Each story could contain any of the elements individually or any combination of the elements. All possible configurations of the elements, and the elements counted singly, yielded thirty categories. The items were placed in the categories on the basis of the definitions of the five elements.

Three hundred thirty-three newscasts were aired during the eight weeks.¹⁰ The news director at each of the three stations permitted the scripts to be surveyed to determine which stories on the air resulted from news releases or press contacts by the public relations practitioners involved in the study.¹¹

In February, 1977, the public relations practitioners were interviewed individually, concerning the relationship they believed existed between the news media and public relations practitioners (Appendix B). Some of the questions asked were taken from a survey instrument developed by Aronoff for a study of the views of newspapermen and public relations practitioners concerning the role of public relations.¹² The three assignments editors, in personal interviews

¹⁰KXAS-TV cancelled three of its ten o'clock newscasts in August for coverage of the GOP convention. The six o'clock newscasts were aired on those days.

¹¹The news directors insisted that their stations remain anonymous in the analysis.

¹²Craig Aronoff, "Newspapermen and Practitioners Differ Widely on PR Role," Public Relations Journal, XXXI (August, 1975), 24-25.

conducted between December 28, 1976, and January 6, 1977, had been asked questions similar to those asked of the practitioners to determine a presumed relationship (Appendix C). The responses to the interviews were compared to the information obtained through the news release and personal contact analyses to determine whether additional qualities of effectiveness could be identified for public relations practitioners.

Organization

The study was arranged in four parts. Chapter I, the Introduction, presents the problem and the means and methods through which the study was undertaken. Chapter II presents an analysis of the news elements in the news items submitted to the editors by the practitioners. Chapter III presents an analysis of the various techniques employed by public relations practitioners and the views of the practitioners and the editors toward each other. Chapter IV presents conclusions and guidelines for effective public relations.

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF NEWS ITEMS

During the eight-week study period, seventy-seven news items were reported to the editors, either through news releases from or by personal contact with the ten practitioners. Thirty-two, or 41.6 per cent, of the seventy-seven were used on the air. Because of the abundance of soft news material available to the editors, little duplication of usage on the air was found. When a soft news item was covered by more than one station, it counted only once in the tabulation under the appropriate element category.¹

Of the thirty possible elements and combinations of elements, eighteen appeared during the study. Four of the categories, prominence-timeliness-visual, prominence, prominence-timeliness, and impact-prominence-proximity-timeliness-visual, accounted for 49 per cent of the total input.

Table I illustrates the frequency of appearance and the selection of the items according to the element categories into which they fell. All proportions on the table have been rounded to the nearest tenth per cent.

¹This study was not concerned with how much coverage a particular news item received, but, rather, with which elements in news items were related to coverage.

TABLE I
 FREQUENCY OF APPEARANCE AND SELECTION OF
 NEWS ELEMENT CATEGORIES IN STORIES

Element Categories*	Number Received	Number Used	Per Cent Used
Prominence-Timeliness-Visual	12	4	33.3
Prominence	12	1	8.3
Prominence-Timeliness	8	1	12.5
Impact-Prominence-Proximity-Timeliness-Visual	6	6	100.0
Prominence-Proximity-Timeliness-Visual	5	3	60.0
Impact-Prominence-Proximity	4	3	75.0
Proximity-Timeliness-Visual	4	2	50.0
Prominence-Proximity	4	1	25.0
Impact-Prominence-Proximity-Timeliness	3	3	100.0
Impact-Prominence-Timeliness	3	3	100.0
Impact-Prominence	3	1	33.3
Prominence-Visual	3	0	0.0
Impact	2	2	100.0
Impact-Prominence-Proximity-Visual	2	0	0.0
Prominence-Proximity-Timeliness	2	1	50.0
Timeliness-Visual	2	0	0.0
Impact-Proximity-Timeliness-Visual	1	1	100.0
Timeliness	1	0	0.0
TOTALS	77	32	41.6

*Twelve element categories did not appear during study period.

Five categories of elements were used each time they appeared, but they accounted for only 19 per cent of the total input. Each of these categories, impact-prominence-proximity-timeliness-visual, impact-prominence-timeliness-visual, impact-prominence-proximity-timeliness, impact-prominence-timeliness, and impact, contained the impact factor. Impact as a single element, or combined with timeliness and either proximity or prominence or both, was used the fifteen times it appeared. In combination with all factors except timeliness, impact was rejected both times it appeared. The editors accepted all six items containing all five of the news elements.

The impact-prominence-proximity combination was highly regarded by the editors, although the practitioners supplied only four such stories. Three were used. Impact, combined with only prominence, was rejected two of the three times it appeared.

The combination of elements including all factors except impact appeared in five news items. The editors accepted three of these stories, apparently indicating their willingness to accept stories without impact if timeliness and visual qualities were supported by the other two elements. However, when the practitioners combined timeliness and visual qualities with only prominence, as they did in twelve stories and in the most frequently appearing combination, the editors chose only four for coverage. Similarly, the combination of timeliness-

visual qualities-proximity was used only two of the four times it appeared.

The combination of prominence-timeliness, the third most frequently appearing category of the practitioners, was accepted by the editors once in eight times. The combination of proximity-timeliness never appeared, but, when both prominence and proximity were combined with timeliness, the editors accepted one of two items. Prominence and proximity, without timeliness, appeared four times, but only one of the stories was used.

Four categories, accounting for 10 per cent of the total input, were rejected each time they appeared. The four categories, timeliness-visual, prominence-visual, impact-prominence-proximity-visual, and timeliness, were found in eight of the seventy-seven stories in the study.

In the seven element categories with a coverage rate of 60 per cent or more, twenty-one stories were used (in twenty-four possibilities). Of these twenty-one, impact and prominence were factors in eighteen; proximity and timeliness, in sixteen; and visual qualities, in ten.

For clarification, it should be noted that stories involving prominence most often included mention of the practitioners' employers as the central points. Even in combination with other elements, the focus rarely shifted from the institutions or their employees. In stories dealing with timeliness, the majority were announcements of upcoming

events, ranging from open forums, concerts and plays to speeches by names nationally recognized primarily within the field of the sponsoring organization. Many of the stories exhibiting visual qualities were preplanned events, in most cases including timeliness. Thirteen large crowd events, i.e., ribbon-cuttings, dedications, and activities open to the public, fell into visual quality categories. For a story to be included in the proximity categories, the action of the story must have taken place specifically within the coverage area, and the action (or actor) must have had significance to the story. Impact stories, the least prevalent of all, dealt with people, actions, or plans that affected large portions of the population in either a positive or negative manner.

Table II summarizes the individual elements in terms of total submission and use in the various combinations. The table indicates that the practitioners placed the greatest emphasis in their news items on the element prominence, having used it alone or in combinations with other elements sixty-seven times in thirteen categories. The editors, however, used only twenty-seven of the sixty-seven stories. Stories dealing only with prominence, generally relying on the familiar name of the practitioner's company to create news media interest, appeared twelve times, but only one was used on the air.

Timeliness and visual qualities, considered important to television news, appeared second and third most frequently in

combinations submitted by practitioners. Timeliness appeared by itself once (and was rejected) and in combination forty-six times in ten categories. Twenty-four of the stories, or 51 per cent, were used. Visual qualities were evident in thirty-five stories in eight categories, with sixteen stories selected for use. No stories containing only visual qualities, usually found in the form of human interest stories, were submitted.

TABLE II
USE OF ELEMENTS

Element	Use in Combinations		Per Cent Aired
	Submitted	Aired	
Prominence	67	27	40
Timeliness	47	24	51
Visual Qualities	35	16	46
Proximity	31	20	65
Impact	24	19	79

The practitioners included proximity factors in thirty-one stories in nine combinations. Sixty-five per cent of these stories were used. Stories involving impact--matters likely to affect large portions of the viewing audience-- were reported to the editors twenty-four times in eight categories

of elements. The editors selected 79 per cent of these stories for coverage. Impact, the single element with the highest percentage of use by the editors, was the least frequently seen in combination with other factors in the practitioners' news items.

Summary

During the eight-week study period, seventy-seven news items were reported to the editors by the participating practitioners. Thirty-two of them were used on the air. The practitioners submitted items in eighteen of a possible thirty element categories.

Five categories of elements, all of which included impact, were aired the fifteen times they appeared. Four categories, with a total of eight stories submitted, were never aired.

Prominence, the element used most often by the practitioners, either alone or in combination with other elements, was selected by the editors 40 per cent of the time. Impact, the element submitted least often by the practitioners, was selected by the editors 79 per cent of the time. The ratio in which each element, alone or in combination with others, was submitted to the editors by the practitioners was in a reverse relationship to the selection rate of the editors.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF ITEM SELECTION PROCESSES OF EDITORS AND SUBMISSION TECHNIQUES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS

To assure the anonymity of the study participants in the analysis of individual techniques, the practitioners and their companies will be referred to as company or practitioner A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I or J. The three assignments editors and their respective television stations will be identified as X, Y, and Z. Any references made by the practitioners and editors that might indicate the company for which they work was deleted. Participation by the individuals was dependent upon the guarantee of anonymity.

News Item Selection by Editors

The selection processes of the three editors were similar during the eight-week study period. The five element categories identified in Chapter II as producing 100 per cent results were covered similarly by the three television stations. Though usage was counted once, regardless of how many stations aired an item, Table III illustrates the similarities in the selection processes of the editors. The thirty-two items aired appeared on the air fifty times. Station X carried eighteen stories; station Y, seventeen; and station Z, fifteen. The element categories with coverage of

TABLE III
NEWS ITEM COVERAGE BY STATION

Element Combinations	Number Aired	Station Coverage					
		Item #1	Item #2	Item #3	Item #4	Item #5	Item #6
Prominence-Timeliness-Visual	4	Y	Y	X	Y		
Prominence	1	Z					
Prominence-Timeliness	1	XZ					
Impact-Prominence-Proximity-Timeliness-Visual	6	Z	X	XYZ	XZ	XY	Y
Prominence-Proximity-Timeliness-Visual	3	Y	Y	XZ			
Proximity-Timeliness-Visual	2	X	YZ				
Prominence-Proximity	1	X					
Impact-Prominence-Proximity	3	X	Y	Z			
Impact-Prominence-Proximity-Timeliness	3	XYZ	XYZ	XYZ			
Impact-Prominence	1	X					
Impact-Prominence-Timeliness	3	YZ	X	Z			
Prominence-Visual	0						
Impact-Prominence-Proximity-Visual	0						
Impact	2	XYZ	XYZ				
Timeliness-Visual	0						
Prominence-Proximity-Timeliness	1	X					
Impact-Proximity-Timeliness-Visual	1	Y					
Timeliness	0						

more than one item were represented in each case by more than one station. The six categories with only one item used were divided among the three stations.

Distribution of Selected News Items

The thirty-two news items selected for use on the air during the eight-week study period were widely distributed among the companies. Table IV illustrates the frequency of appearance and selection of element categories for each company. In only one instance was a category used on the air more than one time monopolized by a single company. Items from each of the ten practitioners were aired a minimum of one time; the greatest number of items aired from a single practitioner was six. The percentage of coverage based on the submission by the practitioners ranged from 12.5 per cent for company B to 83.3 per cent for company F. Five of the practitioners realized a 50 per cent coverage rate, with the number of items submitted by them ranging from two to eight. Companies B and E each submitted sixteen news items, but they had the two lowest percentages of coverage. Company F had the highest percentage of coverage, with five of six items used on the air.

Seven of the practitioners submitted the fifteen items in the five element categories aired each time they appeared. Three of those seven practitioners were responsible for the eight items submitted in the four categories that were never used on the air. Six of the eight items were submitted by practitioner E.

Patterns of Submission by Practitioners

Practitioner A submitted six news items in four categories of elements. Three of the items were aired. One of A's items was in a combination receiving 100 per cent coverage; the others were in combinations used 60 per cent or less. Practitioner A was 100 per cent successful with two items in the prominence-timeliness-visual combination that was used by the editors four times in twelve. In a category used three of the five times submitted, only practitioner A, with two items submitted, did not receive coverage. During interviews, the three editors indicated that soft news items from company A did not receive priority for reasons ranging from, "It's generally garbage," to, "Their news is of limited interest."¹

Practitioner B submitted sixteen items in four of the element categories. With two items used on the air, practitioner B had the lowest percentage of coverage. Eleven of the items submitted by practitioner B were in two categories used only once by the editors; neither time was it an item from practitioner B. Of practitioner B's sixteen items, four were mailed to the editors. Twelve items were hand-delivered to the editors during weekly visits to the newsrooms. Practitioner B indicated in an interview that weekly visits were important to ensure that news items reached the assignments editors and to keep the company aware of personnel changes at

¹Interviews with editor X, January 4, 1977; editor Y, January 6, 1977; and editor Z, December 28, 1976.

the stations.² However, only editor X indicated an interest in regular visits by practitioners.³ Though the editors praised company B's public relations staff for its availability to the news media, they said the large volume of material received generally was not usable on their newscasts.⁴

Two items were submitted by practitioner C during the study period; one was used. Both items were in combinations used 50 per cent or more of the time submitted. When asked for impressions of company C and the practitioner, the three editors indicated they had neither positive nor negative feelings about them.⁵

Company D had the highest percentage of coverage, with six of eight stories selected. The items fell into four categories, two of which were aired every time they appeared. Each of the editors indicated he liked to hear from practitioner D and to receive stories from company D because of the audience's general interest in the company. The editors added that coverage of the items was traditional at the television stations.⁶

Company E displayed the second lowest rate of coverage, with four of sixteen items aired. Six of practitioner E's

²Interview with practitioner B, February 9, 1977.

³Interview with editor X, January 4, 1977.

⁴Interviews with editors, op. cit.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

items were in four categories never selected by the editors. Eleven of the sixteen items were in categories with a coverage rate of 50 per cent or less. Editors Y and Z said they aired items from company E when they had hard news value; editor X said that he found practitioner E unwilling to work with the news media in "truly newsworthy situations."⁷

Practitioner F submitted six news items, five of which were aired. The editors indicated a high regard for items from company F because of the general news value and audience interest in the company.⁸

Practitioner G was successful with four of eight items submitted. The editors indicated a general newsworthiness in company G's items and reflected on the practitioner's professional behavior. Practitioner G said he made frequent visits to the editors out of enjoyment.⁹

Practitioner H submitted two items, one of which was used by the editors. The item used on the air contained the single element impact. The item that was not aired was the only impact-prominence-proximity item not selected by the editors. When asked if any extenuating circumstances were involved in decisions concerning company H's soft news items, the three editors said that the lack of professionalism in the public relations operation contributed to the lack of coverage.¹⁰ Practitioner H said he had known the three

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Interview with practitioner G, February 2, 1977.

¹⁰Interviews with editors, op. cit.

editors for a total of more than thirty years, but he said he did not have frequent contact with them, nor did he believe they expected it.¹¹ The editors said they covered stories with hard news value from company H, but avoided soft news because of the difficulty in getting sufficient information.

Three of seven items submitted by practitioner I were selected by the editors. Five of I's items, one of which was aired, contained one combination of elements that was selected one third of the time. The editors spoke favorably of the public relations at company I, but said the items submitted by the practitioner were generally of a nature unsuitable for their television newscasts.¹²

Practitioner J realized a 50 per cent coverage rate on six items submitted, though none of the items was in a category with more than 60 per cent use on the air. The three editors said they aired material from company J because of its interest to a large portion of the viewing audience.¹³

In two cases, element combinations with 100 per cent selection were dominated by single companies. Although both companies, D and G, had respectable usage percentages, no pattern appeared in their other element combinations to indicate adherence to specific guidelines.

¹¹Interview with practitioner H, February 3, 1977.

¹²Interviews with editors, op. cit.

¹³Ibid.

Techniques of Practitioners

During the interviews, each of the practitioners was told the five news elements and their definitions. They were asked to rank the elements in degree of newsworthiness. The practitioners' oral rankings were compared to their use of the elements in their news items. Table V illustrates the comparison. None of the practitioners selected the most-often submitted element in their news items as the most important. Although seven of the practitioners submitted prominence more often than the other elements, one of them ranked it higher than third in importance. Two of the practitioners named impact as the most important element, but their use of the element ranked it near the bottom.

TABLE V

PRACTITIONERS' ORAL RANKINGS OF NEWS ELEMENTS
COMPARED TO THEIR USE OF ELEMENTS

Company	Oral Ranking of News Elements*	Use of Elements				
		Imp	Prom	Prox	Time	VQ
A	VQ, Prox, Time, Prom, Imp	1	6	4	4	5
B	VQ&Imp (Tie), Time, Prom & Prox (Tie)	0	16	1	11	4
C	VQ, Prox, Imp, Time, Prom	0	2	2	2	1
D	Imp, Prox, Time, Prom, VQ	4	4	7	8	8
E	VQ, Prox, Prom, Time, Imp	8	12	6	5	8
F	Prox, Time, Imp, VQ, Prom	4	6	3	3	2
G	Imp, Time, Prom, Prox, VQ	3	7	3	6	1
H	VQ, Prox, Imp, Time, Prom	2	1	1	0	0
I	VQ, Time, Imp, Prox, Prom	1	7	0	6	5
J	Prom, Imp, VQ, Prox, Time	1	6	4	1	1

*VQ=visual quality; Prox=proximity; Time=timeliness; Prom=prominence; Imp=impact.

Practitioner B ranked visual qualities and impact in a tie for first place, but none of practitioner B's sixteen news items included impact and four contained visual qualities. The practitioner placed proximity and prominence in a tie for last place, yet every item submitted by the practitioner included prominence. Practitioner E ranked prominence third in degree of newsworthiness, yet the element appeared in twelve of sixteen news items submitted.

The practitioners were questioned about tests of subject matter, ways of writing, consideration of news categories in selecting items for television, and prejudices they might have in dealing with television news (Appendix B). Although there was no consensus, the most popular answers were that they looked for impact on the audience and visual qualities. In answering these questions, the practitioners generally supported their oral rankings of the elements.

One practitioner, J, said he generally submitted news items to television stations when sufficient information could be provided in a short form.¹⁴ Of practitioner J's six news items submitted in writing, none of them was more than one page in length. In all, fifteen releases of more than one page were submitted by the practitioners. The two used on the air by the editors contained element categories selected every time they appeared. The thirteen items not aired contained element categories covered no more frequently than one third of the times submitted.

¹⁴Interview with practitioner J, February 9, 1977.

The editors were asked the same questions in regard to their selection of items for use on the air. All three said they looked for the impact on the audience and then sought an item that was "different" or "eye-catching." None of the editors indicated that length was a factor in selection. The editors' rankings of the five soft news elements in degrees of newsworthiness were compared to their selection of the elements for use on the air. Table VI illustrates the comparison, showing the actual number of times each element appeared in stories selected for coverage.

TABLE VI
EDITORS' RANKINGS AND ACTUAL SELECTION OF ELEMENTS

Editor	Oral Ranking of Elements	Actual Selection of Each Element For Use On Air				
		Imp	Prom	Prox	Time	VQ
X	Imp, Prox, VQ, Prom, Time	12	15	12	13	7
Y	Imp, Prox, Time, Prom, VQ	11	13	11	14	10
Z	Imp, Prom, VQ, Prox, Time	11	12	9	11	5

Table VII indicates the percentage of times available that each editor selected the elements, compared to the oral rankings. Since the editors were selecting from stories submitted, the percentage ranking is a more accurate reflection of their selection processes. Table VII indicates that the editors selected items in patterns similar, but not identical, to their oral rankings.

TABLE VII

EDITORS' RANKINGS AND PERCENTAGE SELECTION OF ELEMENTS

Editor	Oral Ranking of Elements	Percentage of Selection of Each Element for Air Use				
		Imp	Prom	Prox	Time	VQ
X	Imp, Prox, VQ, Prom, Time	50.0	38.7	27.7	22.4	20.0
Y	Imp, Prox, Time, Prom, VQ	45.8	35.5	29.8	19.4	28.6
Z	Imp, Prom, VQ, Prox, Time	45.8	29.0	23.4	17.9	14.3

Although nine of the practitioners said they did not believe assignments editors expected personal contact from public relations practitioners, eight of them said they initiated contact on a regular basis. The tenth practitioner said he believed editors expected contact and that he initiated contact on a monthly basis. Practitioner H, whose company was cited as having "the worst PR organization . . . in the area,"¹⁵ said he did not believe the editors wanted visits and he did not have time "to play political games."¹⁶ Of the eight practitioners who said that they visited the editors regularly, four of them did so as frequently as every two weeks during the eight-week study period. Two practitioners had no contact with the editors. One practitioner

¹⁵Interview with editor X, January 4, 1977.

¹⁶Interview with practitioner H, February 3, 1977.

visited the editors one time; one visited three times. Only editor X indicated an interest in regular visits. Table VIII shows the relationship between personal contact with the editors and the percentage of selection of items submitted by the practitioners.

TABLE VIII
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL CONTACT
AND NEWS ITEM SELECTION

Company	Contact During Eight-Week Period	Percentage of Items Selected by Editors
A	None	50.0
B	Weekly (8)	12.5
C	Three	50.0
D	Fortnightly (4)	75.0
E	Weekly (8)	25.0
F	Fortnightly (4)	83.3
G	Weekly (8)	50.0
H	None	50.0
I	One	42.9
J	Monthly (2)	50.0

The most frequent contact, weekly, was by practitioners B, E, and G. Practitioners B and E had the two lowest percentages of coverage; practitioner G had 50 per cent usage. Five practitioners who made three or fewer visits or contacts

during the study period had 50 per cent or less usage of their items. Two practitioners who made contact with the editors four times, or every two weeks, had the highest percentage of usage. Three practitioners made contact on a weekly basis. Usage of their items ranged from 12.5 per cent to 50 per cent. In every instance in which contact was made, regardless of the circumstances through which the contact was made, business matters were discussed.

Three practitioners relied solely on the mail system for dissemination of news items. Table IX shows the means by which each practitioner sent items to the editors and the selection of items by each method. Of the seventy-seven news items submitted to the editors, fifty-two were mailed by the practitioners. Twenty-three, or 44 per cent, were used. Practitioners reported ten items in telephone conversations with the editors. Seven, or 70 per cent, were aired. Identifiable extenuating circumstances accounted for the airing of four of the seven items. Two were in response to questions from the editors; one was an informational report of the death of an employee of the company; and one was a last-minute news conference with high impact. The three items telephoned by practitioner D, and subsequently aired, were the only practitioner-initiated items that did not require the immediacy of telephone contact.

TABLE IX
METHODS OF DISSEMINATION OF NEWS ITEMS

Practitioner	Mail		Telephone		Delivered	
	Submitted	Used	Submitted	Used	Submitted	Used
A	6	3	0	0	0	0
B	4	2	0	0	12	0
C	2	1	0	0	0	0
D	4	3	4	3	0	0
E	15	3	1	1	0	0
F	3	3	1	1	2	1
G	5	3	2	0	1	1
H	2	1	0	0	0	0
I	6	2	1	1	0	0
J	5	2	1	1	0	0

The practitioners delivered fifteen news items to the editors. Two were used on the air; they consisted of element categories aired every time they were available. Twelve of the personally delivered items were from practitioner B; none was aired. The twelve items were divided among three of the element combinations with low usage rates.

The ten practitioners and three editors were asked to define news and soft news. Eight of the practitioners and the three editors defined news as events or actions of interest or importance to the audience. Practitioners B and

J defined news as anything an editor or news director considered news on a particular day. All of the study participants used some variation of "feature material" as the definition of soft news.

Relationship Between News Media and Public Relations

Each of the editors and practitioners was asked a series of questions regarding the philosophy of public relations and the existence of deception, gimmickry, and phoniness in practitioners' relationships with the news media (Appendices B and C). Practitioner I said that the deception once associated with public relations "is a thing of the past."¹⁷ The other nine practitioners indicated it still existed in varying degrees. The reasons for its existence ranged from, "pressure from their superiors or . . . their institutions,"¹⁸ to practitioners "have learned to use the media."¹⁹ Practitioner C stated the prevailing view of the practitioners by saying that the professionals in the media "can spot the phony stuff."²⁰

The editors looked upon the use of phoniness, gimmickry, and deception as the practitioner's job and considered it the editor's responsibility to prevent dissemination of

¹⁷Interview with practitioner I, February 10, 1977.

¹⁸Interview with practitioner A, February 2, 1977.

¹⁹Interview with practitioner E, February 3, 1977.

²⁰Interview with practitioner C, February 8, 1977.

unnewsworthy items. Editor Y said it was a practitioner's job to promote his company and "it's up to the press to recognize the good stuff." Editor X said practitioners "probably over-blow things," but assignments editors "can quickly sort it out." Editor Z said practitioners are "sold on their own creations . . . often they are sold on an unsalable product."²¹

The editors and practitioners agreed that the function of public relations is to communicate an organization's goals to the public and that successful public relations is the result of that communication. The editors said the press and public relations can be partners in their duties since "both provide avenues through which they can expedite information and communication."²² The practitioners were divided on the idea of practitioner and press as "partners." The responses ranged from practitioner H's contention that he is "an extension of the news media itself . . . a correspondent to them," to practitioner A's belief that "public relations is built on a good bit of hypocrisy and sham . . . The press . . . has a tremendous responsibility . . . for getting through all the public relations puffery and flackery." The beliefs of most of the practitioners fell between the extremes of practitioners H and A. Practitioner G explained a partnership in which the press and public

²¹Interviews with editors, op. cit.

²²Interview with editor Z, December 28, 1976.

relations are two separate spheres; where they overlap is partnership. Practitioner F said the partnership developed for the convenience of and assistance to the news media, and, at some point, "the news media people simply decline by inaction to assist us in accomplishing our goals."²³

The practitioners were split on the question of public relations as a profession. Two of them, A and G, referred to a definition of a profession that specifies eight criteria that must be met²⁴ and disagreed as to whether public relations met the criteria. Practitioner F said practitioners were business people, fulfilling business functions. Practitioner F said practitioners were "craftsmen, not professionals." Practitioner B said public relations was definitely not a profession. The others said it could be considered a profession. The three editors agreed that public relations was a profession.

The prevailing answer from the practitioners to a question concerning equal status for public relations and journalism was that the two fields interlock and, in most cases, practitioners are former journalists. Editors X and Z indicated the two were equal in status; editor Y said the two jobs were not the same and, thus, could not be compared.

²³Interview with practitioner F, February 7, 1977.

²⁴The eight criteria specified by the practitioners were (a) dedication to the public welfare; (b) distinct body of knowledge; (c) scholarly research; (d) minimal educational standards; (e) professional ideals and standards regulating practice; (f) a means of enforcement; (g) distinct literature; and (h) method of certification.

When asked to discuss their concepts of the television news audiences, the practitioners said they attempted to relate to the general audience of the television station. They indicated that they looked at changing statistics of the populace to determine who their customers were, but that formal research for identifying the actual television audience was not part of their responsibility. The editors indicated that selecting news items for their specific audiences was part of their job. Editors X and Z said they were dependent upon rating services and research techniques employed by their stations for identifying the audience. Editor Y indicated little interest in audience research. He said he assumed his audience was the "average, middle-income working people" and that "research is done by management . . . that's their job, not mine."

Summary

The three news editors showed similarity in their selection processes in making decisions to air news items submitted by the practitioners. The thirty-two items selected during the study period were used on the air fifty times. Each of the ten companies was represented by at least one story on the air.

The two practitioners who submitted sixteen items, the largest number, had the lowest percentages of usage on the air. The two practitioners submitting the fewest number of items, each of them submitted two, had 50 per cent usage.

The overall usage rates ranged from 12.5 per cent to 83.3 per cent.

Two practitioners had usage rates of more than 50 per cent. In each case, the editors said the items were of general interest to the audience. Five practitioners had 50-per-cent usage rates. The editors' comments regarding the use of items from these practitioners varied. In two instances, the editors said the items were of interest to the general public; in one case they said interest was limited. The editors said one of the companies represented had an ineffective public relations organization and thus suffered from lack of coverage. In the fifth instance, the editors said they had neither positive nor negative reactions to the practitioner and company.

The practitioners' oral rankings of the five elements of newsworthiness did not compare to their actual submission of the elements in news items. None of the practitioners selected the most-often used element in their news items as the most important. The editors' oral rankings of the elements closely approximated their actual selection patterns.

Though none of the editors said the length of a written news release would be a factor in selection for use on the air, only two of fifteen releases of more than one page were aired. One practitioner mentioned a consideration for length of news releases in selecting items to submit to television news desks.

The two practitioners who made contact with the editors every two weeks had the highest usage rates. Practitioners who made contact three or fewer times during the eight-week study period or more than four times had usage rates of 50 per cent or less.

Sixty-eight per cent of the news items submitted were sent through the mail; 13 per cent were telephoned to the editors; and 19 per cent were delivered by the practitioners. Usage rates by method of distribution were 44 per cent for mailed items; 70 per cent for telephoned items; and 13 per cent for delivered items.

Nine of the ten practitioners said public relations is still characterized in some ways by deception, gimmickry, and phoniness. The editors agreed and indicated a greater tolerance for such practices than the practitioners allowed their colleagues and themselves.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

In an effort to identify factors contributing to the selection of soft news items for use on television newscasts, a study was undertaken to analyze news elements in press releases, techniques employed by public relations practitioners, and selection processes of television news editors. News editors from the three commercial network affiliate stations in Dallas-Fort Worth participated in the study with ten practitioners selected by the editors.

During an eight-week study period, all news releases submitted by the practitioners to the editors were compiled and catalogued according to five elements of newsworthiness contained in the items. The practitioners kept diaries of all contacts made with the editors by telephone or in person. The scripts of the evening newscasts were surveyed to determine which news items submitted by the practitioners were used on the air. Each of the participants in the study was interviewed concerning the relationship between public relations and the news media, as well as specific beliefs concerning the execution of duties by practitioners and editors.

An analysis of elements contained in the news items submitted and selected and of the techniques of the practitioners would permit the development of guidelines for public relations practitioners to follow for effective dealings with television news desks.

Seventy-seven news items were submitted to the editors during the study period. Of these, thirty-two were selected for the air. Each practitioner submitted a minimum of two items. At least one item from each practitioner was aired.

Thirty categories of elements, including single elements, were possible. News items containing eighteen were submitted by the practitioners. Items containing prominence, alone or in combination with other elements, involved persons or institutions with a high recognition factor among the audience. These items were submitted by the practitioners most frequently. The editors, however, used a smaller percentage -- 40 per cent -- of prominence stories than any other. Items containing impact, an effect on a large portion of the audience, were submitted least frequently by the practitioners. The editors used the highest percentage -- 79 per cent -- of the stories with impact. The other elements, timeliness, visual qualities, and proximity (submitted in that order), were used 51 per cent, 46 per cent, and 65 per cent, respectively, of the times they appeared in news items.

Five categories of elements, accounting for 19 per cent of the total input, were aired each time they appeared.

Each of these categories contained impact. Four categories of elements, accounting for 10 per cent of the input, were never selected by the editors.

In choosing items for use on television newscasts, the editors showed similarity in their selection processes. The thirty-two items aired appeared fifty times among the three stations. No single station was responsible for airing all items in any element category aired more than once.

In items reported to the editors, each practitioner submitted at least two of the element categories. The airing of items was widely distributed among the companies. One category accounting for more than one item on the air was dominated by a single company. In all other cases, multiple-aired categories were divided among two or more companies.

Each of the study participants was asked during interviews to rank the five news elements in degree of newsworthiness for soft news items. The oral rankings were compared to each practitioner's submission of items and the editors' selection processes. None of the practitioners ranked the elements in accordance with their submission of them. Most notably, seven practitioners submitted news items containing prominence most often, but only one of them ranked it higher than third in importance.

The editors' oral rankings were similar, though not identical, to their selection of news items when compared to the percentage of times each element was submitted and

subsequently aired. The three editors named impact as the most newsworthy element and selected it for airing the greatest percentage of times available.

Nine of the practitioners stated that assignments editors probably did not expect personal contact from practitioners. Two of the editors confirmed that belief; one indicated an interest in regular contact. During the study period, five practitioners made contact three or fewer times; three made contact on a weekly basis; and two practitioners made contact every two weeks. None of the practitioners reported any contact with the editors during which no business was discussed. The two practitioners who had contact approximately every two weeks had the highest percentage of usage of news items submitted. All others had usage of 50 per cent or less.

Conclusions

The analysis of data from the study indicated a pattern does exist in the selection processes of television news editors. When faced with a given supply of news items from which to select items for use on the air, the editors have at least a subconscious consideration for the five elements of newsworthiness. Timeliness and visual quality as elements of newsworthiness, despite their obvious adaptability to the immediacy of the television medium, were not singly sought elements in news items. Even in dealing with soft news, the editors chose items that affected large portions of the

audience, with apparent disregard for visual angles in many cases. Items that dealt primarily with prominent people and institutions were rarely selected by the editors. When impact was not a factor, the editors selected timeliness and visual qualities when combined with prominence and proximity.

Hypothesis 1, that the incorporation of certain news elements into a news item will not increase the probability of selection for television coverage, is rejected.

By selecting 79 per cent of the items that contained impact, the editors showed that the inclusion of impact factors in news items greatly increased the probability of selection for use on television newscasts. Reliance on the prominence factor, selected only 40 per cent of the time, did not provide a likelihood of coverage. The other elements, timeliness, visual qualities, and proximity, were selected by the editors 51 per cent, 46 per cent, and 65 per cent of the time, respectively, indicating the following order of selection by the editors: impact, proximity, timeliness, visual qualities, and prominence.

Hypothesis 2, that personal techniques of public relations practitioners do not play a significant role in determining whether a news item is covered, is rejected.

The data indicated that the methods employed by practitioners in the execution of their duties could affect the television coverage received. The most notable area in which practitioners could control the results was in the use of

the five elements of newsworthiness. The comparison of the practitioners' oral rankings of the elements to their actual use of the elements in their news items indicated the practitioners' failure to consider fully the importance of items before submitting them to the editors. The practitioners' preoccupation with prominence, having submitted it in sixty-seven of the seventy-seven items, was the least effective technique employed. Attention to the newsworthiness of an item would be beneficial to a practitioner.

Another way in which practitioners could influence the results in selection by the editors was by limiting items submitted for television news to those that can be explained adequately in writing on one page. Soft news releases of more than one page were used by the editors only in high-selection categories.

Another influencing factor is personal contact. Frequent contact with news editors in professional, rather than social situations, does not increase the amount of coverage given to a practitioner's news items. The highest usage was realized by those practitioners who contacted the editors every two weeks. The practitioners with the most frequent contact, weekly, realized the lowest usage percentages. Since all contact reported during the study was business-related, no conclusion can be drawn regarding a relationship between social contact with editors and subsequent usage of items on the air.

The use of the mail system is the most effective method of distribution of news items when extenuating circumstances are not a factor. The use of the telephone can be effective but should be reserved for practitioners who have built a favorable relationship with the editors. The least successful method of distribution is personal delivery. The editors do not expect personal visits from practitioners. Only items with high impact and immediacy or need for explanation were used after being hand-delivered.

Practitioners must build a relationship with news editors based on credibility and professionalism. According to the editors, honest and open exchanges are necessary for news sources to prove these traits. The abundance of soft news items available permits news editors to reject items on the basis of the practitioner's professional attributes.

A large quantity of news items does not guarantee a high rate of coverage. On the basis of this study, practitioners should submit an average of one news item per week to news editors at television stations. The six practitioners who submitted six to eight items during the eight-week study period had usage percentages ranging from 42.8 per cent to 83.3 per cent, for an average of 50 per cent. The lowest usage results were realized by the two practitioners who submitted the largest quantity of news items.

The practitioners as a group said they did not consider the audiences of the television stations when submitting news

items. They said they knew who their clients or consumers were, but that the news editors were responsible for the television audiences. A greater regard for the television news viewer would help practitioners target their news items and eliminate some of the unusable material received by the editors.

Guidelines

Public relations practitioners who seek coverage for their companies on television newscasts should explore the programming policies and tendencies that exist at individual stations. As in all situations, absolute guidelines are impossible. From the conclusions of this study, the following guidelines are offered to practitioners who supply news items to television news desks. Modifications of these guidelines should be made when appropriate.

1. Consider the elements of newsworthiness in an item suggested for television news. With limited air time, editors have a responsibility to the viewers to impart the information of most relevance to the largest portion of the audience. Television news editors want items with high impact and with action taking place within the coverage area. If impact is not a factor, the item should contain the other four elements -- prominence, proximity, timeliness, and visual qualities.

2. Keep news releases short. If extensive background information is necessary to establish a story, it will not

be adaptable to television news. Television news items should be told with full explanation in one typed page.

3. Be selective in items submitted to television news desks. All soft news items deemed appropriate for use on the air cannot be used because of time limitations. For most effective results, limit the number of items sent to an average of one per week for highly visible organizations.

4. Establish professionalism and credibility with news editors through honesty and openness. Coverage of soft news items is often dependent upon the editor's trust in the public relations practitioner at a company.

5. Be available to members of the news media at all hours. When information is sought, it is needed at the newsman's convenience.

6. Regular, but infrequent, contact should be maintained with television news editors. Companies with high visibility and great impact on the audience should consider contact by telephone or in person no more frequently than once every two weeks. Less visible organizations in the community should modify this average downward.

7. Mail news items to television stations when possible. Items should be telephoned or hand-delivered to editors when time and urgency are legitimate factors.

8. Develop an understanding of television news audiences in general and the local audiences in particular. Items of

interest to a limited audience, or items of technical and specialized nature, are not suitable for television news.

Recommendations for Future Study

This study was limited to the relationship that existed between specified techniques of selected public relations practitioners and the selection processes of television news editors. Future studies should consider all news releases received by television news editors and seek relationships with the addition of new variables; more companies or organizations involved; less visible companies or organizations; the distance to a story location; and the size of city or town from which news emanates.

The relationship between social contacts with news editors and subsequent use of news items could not be drawn from this study. Future studies should attempt to include this element.

Variables involved in this study, such as newsworthiness, professionalism, credibility, methods of news release delivery, length of news items, and amount of personal contact, should be included in future studies.

APPENDIX A

PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS IN STUDY

Bob Halford State Fair of Texas	Bob Shaw Dallas Police Department
Betty Holloway Fairmont Hotel	Joe Sherman Southern Methodist University
Joe McNamara Southwestern Bell	Ray Ward Dallas Power & Light Company
Dick Sutcliffe Dallas Chamber of Commerce	*Jerome Davis Dallas-Fort Worth Airport
Jere Cox Braniff International	**Camille Keith Southwest Airlines
*Muriel Daniels Methodist Central Hospital	**Bruce Neal Six Flags Over Texas

*These two participants resigned from their positions prior to the end of the study period. Each of them designated a staff member to continue mailing releases and keeping the diary of contacts. These two participants agreed to the interviews on the basis of their former positions.

**Declined to participate. Keith believed her company was too heavily involved in litigation and controversial matters to be appropriate for the study. Neal believed his company's seasonal interests would reflect poorly on the company's image in the study.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS

1. What do you consider to be the role of public relations?
2. What is successful public relations?
3. Do you believe the press and public relations are partners in the dissemination of information? Why?
4. Do you believe practitioners too frequently insist on promoting products, services, or other activities that do not legitimately deserve promotion? How?
5. Do you believe practitioners have cluttered our channels of communication with pseudo-events and phony phrases that confuse public issues?
6. Do you believe public relations material is publicity disguised as news? Explain.
7. Do you believe practitioners too often try to deceive the press by attaching too much importance to trivial uneventful happenings? Explain.
8. Do you consider public relations a profession?
9. Do you consider public relations equal in status to journalism?
10. How do you define news? soft news?
11. How would you rank these elements in degrees of news-worthiness for soft news: impact, prominence, proximity, timeliness, visual qualities?
12. What specific tests of subject matter or way of writing do you use to select any particular news item for television?
13. How does the category of news affect your choice of items for release to television news?
14. What prejudices do you have that may affect your choice of news items for release?
15. Do you select news items for release for a particular audience?

16. What is your concept of your audience(s)? the television audience?
17. How did you arrive at your concept(s) of the audience(s)?
18. How do you update your concept(s) of the audience(s)? How frequently?
19. Do you make frequent personal visits to assignments editors at local television stations?
20. Do you believe assignments editors expect frequent personal visits from public relations practitioners?
21. How long have you known Doug Adams, Bert Shipp, and Buster McGregor? Has your relationship been primarily social or professional?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR ASSIGNMENTS EDITORS

1. What do you consider to be the role of public relations?
2. What is successful public relations?
3. Do you believe the press and public relations are partners in the dissemination of information? Why?
4. Do you believe practitioners too frequently insist on promoting products, services, or other activities that do not legitimately deserve promotion? How?
5. Do you believe practitioners have cluttered our channels of communication with pseudo-events and phony phrases that confuse public issues? How?
6. Do you believe public relations material is publicity disguised as news? Explain.
7. Do you believe practitioners too often try to deceive the press by attaching too much importance to trivial uneventful happenings? Explain.
8. Do you consider public relations a profession?
9. Do you consider public relations equal in status to journalism?
10. How do you define news? soft news?
11. How would you rank these elements in degrees of news-worthiness for soft news: impact, prominence, proximity, timeliness, visual qualities?
12. What specific tests of subject matter or ways of writing a news release help you select any particular news item?
13. How does the category of news affect your choice of news stories for use on the air?
14. What prejudices do you have that may affect your choice of news stories?
15. Do you select stories for your audience as you perceive it?

16. What is your concept of your audience?
17. How did you arrive at your concept of your audience?
18. How do you update your concept of your audience? How frequently?
19. Do you expect personal visits from public relations practitioners?
20. Do you want personal visits from public relations practitioners?
21. (Company by company) What, if any, extenuating circumstances contribute to your selection of news items from these companies?

(Editors were supplied with a list of the companies participating in the study.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Adams, Alexander B., Handbook of Public Relations, New York, Crowell, 1965.
- Bloomenthal, Howard, Promoting Your Cause, New York, Funk & Wagnalls, 1971.
- Canfield, Bertrand R., Public Relations, 5th ed., Homewood, Ill., R. D. Irwin, Inc., 1968.
- Cutlip, Scott M. and Allen H. Center, Effective Public Relations, 4th ed., Englewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971.
- Lesly, Philip, editor, Public Relations Handbook, 3rd ed., Englewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967.
- Marston, John E., The Nature of Public Relations, New York, McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1963.
- Nolte, Lawrence W., Fundamentals of Public Relations: Professional Guidelines, Concepts, and Integrations, New York, Pergamon Press, 1974.
- Schoenfeld, Clarence Albert, Publicity Media and Methods: Their Role in Modern Public Relations, New York, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1963.
- Steinberg, Charles Side, The Mass Communicators: Public Relations, Public Opinion, and Mass Media, New York, Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1958.

Articles

- Aronoff, Craig, "Newspapermen and Practitioners Differ Widely on PR Role," Public Relations Journal, XXXI (August, 1975), 24-25.
- Brown, Robert U., "Publicity Quackery," Editor and Publisher, XCVI (September 21, 1963), 64.
- Buckalew, James K., "News Elements and Selection by Television News Editors," Journal of Broadcasting, XIV (Winter, 1969-70), 47-54.

- _____, "A Q-Analysis of Television News Editors' Decisions," Journalism Quarterly, XLVI (Spring, 1969), 35-37.
- Danilov, Victor J., "Business Editors List PR Likes and Dislikes," Editor and Publisher, XC (September 14, 1957), 62.
- _____, "Public Relations Men Praise Handling of News Copy by Press," Editor and Publisher, XC (August 3, 1957), 26.
- Feldman, Lee, "City Editor's Image of PR Man 'Blurred,'" Editor and Publisher, XCIV (July 22, 1961), 36.
- _____, "The Public Relations Man as City Editors See Him," Quill, XLIX (October, 1961), 16.
- Fowler, Joseph S. and Stuart W. Showalter, "Evening Network News Selection: A Confirmation of News Judgment," Journalism Quarterly, LI (Winter, 1974), 712-715.
- Goldberg, Emanuel, "The Twilight Zone--Between Editor and Practitioner," Public Relations Journal, XVI (June, 1960), 14-15.
- Harless, James D., "Mail Call: A Case Study of a Broadcast News Gatekeeper," Journalism Quarterly, LI (Spring, 1974), 87-90.
- Harris, David H., "Publicity Releases: Why They End Up in the Wastebasket," Industrial Marketing, XLVI (June, 1961), 98-100.
- McIntyre, Robert B., "What You Know, Not Who, Most Important," Editor and Publisher, XCIV (April 29, 1961), 86.
- Nicolai, Richard R. and Sam G. Riley, "Gatekeeping Function from Point of View of the PR Man," Journalism Quarterly, XLIX (Summer, 1972), 371-373.
- Normoyle, John, "'Contacts' in Public Relations Work: A Survey of Editors' Opinions," Public Relations Journal, XV (October, 1959), 24-28.
- Poorman, Paul, "Public Relations--The Newsman's View," Public Relations Journal, XXX (March, 1974), 14.
- Saunders, Scott J., "Six Sins To Avoid in Publicity Copy," Public Relations Journal, VIII (June, 1952), 13.

Snider, Paul B., "'Mr. Gates' Revisited: A 1966 Version of the 1949 Case Study," Journalism Quarterly, XLIV (Autumn, 1967), 419-427.

Talbert, Lane, "Personal Favours and the Press," Public Relations Journal, XXX (February, 1974), 10-12.

Tichenor, Phillip J., Clarice N. Olien and George A. Donohue, "Predicting a Source's Success in Placing News in the Media," Journalism Quarterly, XLIV (Spring, 1967), 32-42.

Trenholm, Lee, "Press Agents Irritate the Press," Public Opinion Quarterly, II (October, 1938), 671-678.

Van Deusen, Donald T., "The Myth of Contacts," Public Relations Journal, XIX (June, 1963), 19.

White, David Manning, "The 'Gatekeeper': A Case Study in the Selection of News," Journalism Quarterly, XXVII (Fall, 1950), 383-390.

Interviews

Doug Adams, KXAS-TV, Dallas, May 11, 1976.

Buster McGregor, KDFW-TV, Dallas, May 6, 1976.

Bert Shipp, WFAA-TV, Dallas, May 11, 1976.

Editor X, Dallas, January 4, 1977.

Editor Y, Dallas, January 6, 1977.

Editor Z, Dallas, December 28, 1976.

Practitioner A, Dallas, February 2, 1977.

Practitioner B, Dallas, February 9, 1977.

Practitioner C, Dallas, February 8, 1977.

Practitioner D, Dallas, February 7, 1977.

Practitioner E, Dallas, February 3, 1977.

Practitioner F, Dallas, February 7, 1977.

Practitioner G, Dallas, February 2, 1977.

Practitioner H, Dallas, February 3, 1977.

Practitioner I, Dallas, February 10, 1977.

Practitioner J, Dallas, February 9, 1977.