

# PR Myths



By Mark Weiner, CEO of [PRIME Research-Americas](#)

While the Greeks looked to Mount Olympus to explain the laws of nature, other myths throughout history have been used to protect the vested interests of a select group. In both cases, myths help to explain and bring order to the sometimes chaotic world of everyday life.

Like many cultures, the [Public Relations](#) profession adheres to a unique catalogue of mythology. And like all mythologies, PR's mythology breaks down severely when planning, decision-making and performance evaluation take place without the benefit of facts, truth and even common sense.

In this new monthly series, Mark Weiner, CEO of [PRIME Research Americas](#) seeks to shed light on “conventional wisdom” and dispel the myths of public relations. Given the time of year, it's only appropriate that we begin with “the myths of PR objectives-setting.”

**Myth:** *A good way to set objectives is to track your competition and set your goals based on their performance.*

**Truth:** Tracking competitive performance can be a great source of insight through an analysis of relative strengths and weaknesses in terms of message delivery, media receptivity and more. But as a basis for setting objectives, it's a risky assumption that your competitors have the same resources as you do; that their objectives, business priorities and timetable are the same as yours, and, well, that they even

know what they're doing to begin with!

A more reliable approach is to begin with a clean slate: determine which objectives are reasonable, meaningful and measurable for **you**: use your competition as one of several reality-checks which may include your own "internal clients" whose opinions will contribute to overall planning, resource allocation and evaluation; your peers in marketing and communication whose plans may help to elevate or handicap your own plans; and a research-based marketplace assessment to ensure that your plans are free from assumptions, guesswork and erroneous conclusions.

**Myth:** *It's better to set objectives quickly so the campaign can launch rather than wait and build consensus*

**Truth:** While today's business climate requires speed, setting objectives without consensus is a risky proposition. Clear, concise objectives upon which key internal and external clients agree are the key to proving value and minimizing risk. The fallacy is rooted in the false belief that consensus must be time-consuming and laborious.

Consensus-building becomes simpler and more efficient when the priorities of the organization and the preferences of key executives are known in advance. One approach is the annual "executive audit" which helps to align overall objectives prior to the launch of an individual campaign. Based on a solid foundation, campaign-specific objectives become an exercise in incremental adjustment rather than "starting from scratch."

***Looking to dispel a myth of your own? We welcome your submission: [weiner@prime-research.com](mailto:weiner@prime-research.com)***

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*About the Author: Mark Weiner is CEO of PRIME Research Americas. PRIME is among the world's largest PR research firm with 500 analysts and consultants employed in ten service centers around the globe. Mark is the author of "Unleashing the Power of PR" published by John Wiley & Sons. To learn more about PRIME, visit [www.prime-research.com](http://www.prime-research.com) for additional information.*

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