

# Eleven Questions You Must Ask Before Conducting Public Relations Research

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*What are your organization's objectives?* The need to relate an organization's activities and investments to its overall goals and objectives is not confined to [public relations](#), but not doing so is a surefire path to failure. Who cares, for example, if the PR department generates awareness for matters that fall outside the organization's

purview? Ensuring that your objectives support the organization's is the surest way to avoid risk and to merchandise success, and the process for uncovering answers to this question is so easy that not to do so is, in a word, ridiculous.

- *What are your department's objectives?* Just as it is essential for the PR department to support the overall organization's priorities, so too must the individual campaign strategy and tactics support the department's objectives. For example, in many organizations the primary PR objective is to stay out of the media. Generating a ton of coverage, which passes as a key objective at many PR organizations, may be counterproductive in cases such as these. Not aligning your objectives or your campaign's objectives to the department's goals leads to irrelevancy. And once again, answering this question is so easy, so accessible, that noncompliance is a form of professional malpractice.

- *What other programs are currently under way?* In the practice of public relations, which can affect such a wide range of areas within the organization, it is essential to have a firm grasp of what other initiatives—both communication programs and others—are in process. Today’s larger organizations are often so decentralized as to make coordination between departments almost impossible. But it is essential that you know what else might be in play and how these initiatives may affect one another.

- *What other departments will be affected?* In your quest to establish the optimal PR plan, you ought to determine the impact, if any, on other departments. To go through the complete public relations planning process without consideration for other departments and their respective planning and activities is to risk that your plans will be either less effective or, even worse, counterproductive as a result of what another department may be doing. Imagine the impact of a PR plan that emphasizes a theme like “Workplace Excellence” at the same time that the company is moving jobs to another country? With even the slightest miscalculation, the potential for perceived dishonesty is great. Especially when a simple conversation with peers in departments such as finance, human resources, advertising, and manufacturing is as easy as picking up the phone or walking down the hall. Consider the upside for working collaboratively, since public relations shares so much with other forms of marketing and communication, and reflects so broadly on the entire organization.

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