
New York Public Service Commission Public Relations

*Relations with the Media, Consumer Organizations and
Stakeholders*

David Flanagan
Director of Public Affairs
NYS Public Service Commission

Public Relations

- What is Public Relations?
- Who are the NYSPSC's "publics"?
- How do we communicate with various "publics"?
- Media Relations
- Managing political interests and involvement in Commission processes

Define the term “Public Relations”

- “Public Sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed. Consequently, he who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes or decisions possible or impossible to be executed.” -- Abraham Lincoln

What the Textbook Says About Public Relations

- PR is the way in which a corporation or organization communicates to all its audiences, whether internal or external
- PR is to whom an organization communicates, actively or passively, openly or tacitly, aggressively or not at all

Remember, not communicating still says something very loudly!

What the Textbook Says About Public Relations

- PR is almost every form of communication except advertising.
- PR is a tool used by organizations to keep reminding various publics of who they are, what they do, and where they are going.

Every act of an institution and every inaction is a form of communication that can and often does affect the way it is perceived by its various publics.

The NYPSC's "Publics"

Utilities	Ratepayers/Consumers	Consumer Groups
Environmental Groups	Financial Community	Legislators
Government Agencies	Media	Local Government
Other PSCs	Trade Associations	Trade Press
Lobbyists	Large Industry	Generators
Equipment Manufacturers	Low Income/Special Needs Customers	Federal Regulators

How Do We Communicate With Our Publics?

- Commission Proceedings
- Commission decisions
- Documents and publications
- Presentations and events
- Consumer Services
- Executive Correspondence
- Media

How Do We Communicate?

Commission Decisions/Business on the Web site

- Orders and Opinions
- Recommended Decisions
- Staff Reports
- Rulings
- Notices
- Agendas/Session Notices
- Consent Summaries
- Latest Filings
- Webcast of Commission Sessions

How Do We Communicate?

Documents and Publications

- Comprehensive Web site
- Annual Reports
- Outreach and Education Brochures and Materials
- Press Releases

How Do We Communicate?

Presentations and Events

- Educational Forums
- Public Statement Hearings
- Speeches and Presentations
- Trade Shows
- State Fair
- Consumer Leader Mailings
- Collaborative Forums

How Do We Communicate?

Consumer Services

- Toll-free consumer complaint lines
- Staff of 54 consumer specialists to handle complaints
- Average approximately 80,000 contacts per year
- Contacts result in opening of 30,000-35,000 cases per year

How Do We Communicate?

Executive Correspondence

- Average approximately 60 to 75 letters per month from public officials and consumers regarding utility problems
- Letters are assigned to appropriate office for investigation and resolution
- Staff assigned researches consumer's concerns and prepares response
- Expectation is for response to be finalized in a two- to three-week turnaround from date letter was received

How Do We Communicate?

Press Releases

- Press releases on major Commission decisions and policies

- Average between 80-100 press releases per year
 - *Major Commission decisions*
 - *Publicize hearings, events and forums*
 - *Session announcements*

- Maintain extensive distribution list of traditional media, trade press and other interested parties

How Do We Communicate?

Press Coverage of the PSC

- Wire services (Associated Press, Bloomberg Business News) and business reporters for major daily newspapers provide most in-depth coverage of PSC and are most frequent callers
- Also receive frequent inquiries from trade publications, such as *The Energy Daily*, *Power Daily Northeast*, and *Public Utilities Fortnightly*
- Our issues are very technical and typically do not lend themselves to a lot of TV coverage
- TV News will often cover events, forums and presentations
- Public Affairs Office handled approximately 1,120 press calls in 2003.

Managing Political Interests and Involvement in Commission Processes

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Managing Political Interests and Involvement in Commission Processes

- Our “publics” are also “stakeholders”
- Stakeholders are individuals or groups whose support is an important factor in the success of an organization

Challenge: Each public, or stakeholder, is interested in the PSC for different reasons, and each has a different view of what the PSC should do

Need to Manage Numerous Parties/Stakeholders with Diverse Interests

- New York's intervention rules allow parties to participate if it is "likely to contribute to complete record or is otherwise fair and in the public interest;" parties coming in late are bound by record as already developed (16 NYCRR §§ 4.3(c)(1) and (2))
- Role of New York Department of Public Service Staff – participate as trial staff if needed; staff has participated as technical advisor with Administrative Law Judges

Need to Manage Numerous Parties with Diverse Interests

- Role of Administrative Law Judge
- Identify active/interested parties
- Establish schedule for proceeding
- Use of conferences involving all parties
 - *Telephone/video conferences*
 - *Technical conferences*
 - *Procedural conferences*
 - *Discovery*
 - *Innovative, flexible approaches*

Need to Manage Numerous Parties with Diverse Interests

- Commission works hard to ensure an open, transparent and fair process for all interested parties and to actively communicate important information
- “We have found that our interests were best served when the public interests were best served; and we believe that such success as we have had has been because our business has been conducted along these lines.” -- Theodore Newton Vail, president of AT&T, 1913