

# THE POWER OF SMALL ORGANISATIONS THAT THINK LIKE BIG ASSOCIATIONS

A KEY COMPONENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR SMALL ORGANISATIONS IS THE ROLE OF BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE ORGANISATION'S AUDIENCE, STAKEHOLDERS, MEMBERS AND THE PUBLIC. THE ROLE OF GETTING PUBLICITY IS MUCH LESS IMPORTANT, ACCORDING TO A NEW REPORT - THINKING BIG, STAYING SMALL -RELEASED BY THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATORS (IABC) RESEARCH FOUNDATION.

The data in this 4-year study supported the idea that there are three distinct perspectives among small organisations when it comes to the value of relationship-building in the organisation: (1) the idea that relationship-building is an objective in and of itself, (2) the idea that it's a strategic function or (3) a purely tactical undertaking.

The success of a small organisation's public relations often rests in the communication skills and perseverance of the top decision makers. The chief executive plays a central role in communication in a small organisation, whether it is a for-profit, not-for-profit, trade association or government agency

Communications are seen as key to sustaining growth, and to underpin this belief, the report looked carefully at what communication functions are likely to be outsourced at various stages in an organisation's devel-

opment. When examining how successful small organisations grow their membership, raise their profiles and become sustainable entities, it is also vital to look the different communication skill requirements in smaller organisations. In addition to size as a factor influencing communications requirements, we can also ask: How do requirements differ for different types of organisations?

By focusing on a largely ignored sector- the small organisation - this report also examined the point in an organisation's growth at which communication operations start to take on formality.

Some key findings of the study are:

- + Small organisations approach public relations holistically from a variety of perspectives and view the function as both proactive and reactive.
- + Small organisations practice public rela-

tions based more on instinct and personal feeling than on formal training, and tend to focus heavily on the use of personal and direct forms of communications, as opposed to mass media or large gatherings, in order to communicate messages.

- + The relationship of the communication staff size to the overall size of the organisation was a new 'predictor of excellence' (as that term is defined in public relations literature). Excellence was linked not to the size of the organisation as much as to the ratio

## "THE SUCCESS OF A SMALL ORGANISATION'S PUBLIC RELATIONS OFTEN RESTS IN THE COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND PERSEVERANCE OF THE TOP DECISION MAKERS".

of communication employees to the size of the workforce.

- + Small organisations begin to change and formalise their communication processes and procedures when they reach about 20 employees in size. Mid-range size organisations (11 to 20 employees) are most likely to outsource communication functions.
- + Once an organisation exceeds 20 employees, it is usually willing to keep more functions in-house.

The full report at US \$49.60 can be ordered at <http://store.yahoo.com/iabcstore/thbistsm.html> or by calling the IABC on +1 415.544.4700 or 1 800.776.4222.

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