

Reviews

Marketing Public Relations; the Hows That Make It Work, by Rene A. Henry Jr. Iowa State University Press, Ames, 1995. (ISBN 0-8138-2208-40.) 336 pp. hardcover, \$29.95.

The first sentence in Henry's book defines his subject: "Marketing public relations is a comprehensive, all-encompassing, public awareness and information program or campaign directed to mass or specialty audiences to influence increased sales or use of an organization's product or service." Put more simply, what he's talking about is public relations efforts designed specifically to sell something rather than merely to create or maintain a favorable image.

Although the intensive use of public relations techniques to sell consumer products is relatively new, the idea that public relations can be an important element of the marketing mix has been around for a long time. The biggest change, according to Harold Burson, Burson-Marsteller agency founder who wrote the foreword to this book, is that marketers today are more willing to commit money to public relations activities.

It follows logically that marketing public relations is gaining in importance as a specialized segment of the broad public relations field. We knew that.

What we may not have known, though, is the extent to which the public relations practices employed to sell products are similar to or different from the "standard" public relations techniques. *Marketing Public Relations* shows that there is not too much difference.

Because the techniques are similar, this book becomes a valuable reference for anyone who has public relations or public information responsibilities. The "how" theme that carries throughout the book makes it work: how to make use of research, how to target publics, how to use special publications, how to build coalition support, and how to measure results are important examples.

One chapter covers special events. Special events have been part of public relations "since public relations became a profession," the author notes. He offers splendid examples of special events that work, and a few that don't. An appendix provides a sample special event budget form and checklists that in themselves are a complete guide to event planning and organizing. The checklists get down to important (but sometimes overlooked) details such as making sure the lawn sprinklers are turned off.

The next chapter is devoted to sponsorship of existing events. It is most useful, perhaps, for its detailed "Media Host's Outline." For those who work at higher levels, it includes a couple of pages on dealing with the White House.

The book includes 19 chapters, each devoted to a specific "how to" topic. It is well indexed.

There has been a serious lack of good public relations textbooks in recent years. I still use sections from some of the standard works published more than 20 years ago as class references in my courses. Henry's book will not fill that gap. However, as a practical primer better suited to the professional communicator than to the student, it deserves high marks. Henry writes from the perspective of two decades of professional experience in public relations. He was a consultant to the 1984 Olympic Games, and served in the election campaign and subsequent administration of President George Bush. More recently, he has been executive director of university relations at Texas A&M University.

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