

Guidance for Regional Committees

Dealing with the Media & Public Relations

Introduction to Public Relations

Public relations (PR) is the way organisations, companies and individuals communicate with the public and media.

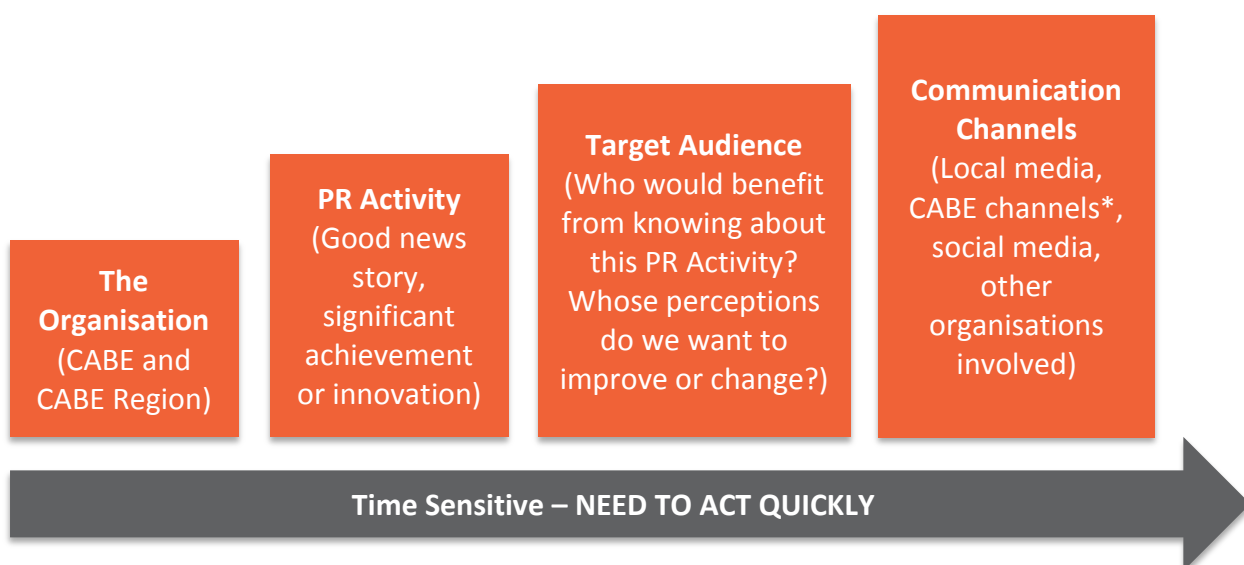
PR is used by many organisations including CABE to:

- Strengthen and maintain the public image
- Raise awareness of various innovations and causes
- Increase positive perceptions

Very often PR is used in a positive way to achieve the above aims. Themes of content include 'good news stories', 'significant achievements' and 'beneficial innovations', all of which have to be relevant to the target audience.

Main Elements of Public Relations

Essentially, the main elements that make PR work are:



The Organisation

In terms of PR Activity, there are a few ways in which CABE and your CABE Region have a significant input:

- CABE – As your Region is part of an international membership organisation, who's main aims are to develop professionals, share knowledge and raise standards, you need refer to this to reinforce your communications surrounding your PR activity, as well as using your CABE Membership (as a Chartered Building Engineer) to give you/a regional representative professional recognition.
Please tell CABE HQ about any PR activity your Region is undertaking, so we can support you and help make the most of it.
- CABE Region – While you are a member of a global organisation, it's important to emphasise your regional presence in the PR activity and in communications. This helps to quickly generate local rapport and shows the target audience that as an organisation, we are in touch with local areas.

PR Activity

There are two main approaches your Region needs to take when it comes to organising PR that's relevant to the Built Environment:

1) Proactive Approach

This means all PR Activity needs to be planned well in advance, so there is time to communicate with CABE HQ to inform us about the activity and with any other organisations or parties involved to orchestrate the PR Activity. With this approach, your Region will be either organising a PR Activity or seeking permission to take part in one if it's organised by a third party.

The Proactive approach to organising or gaining PR is usually more concrete, as you will know when certain activities will be taking place and can organise accordingly.

Some industry relevant examples of proactive PR activities organised by your Region or a third party could include:

- Regional Conferences and Events
- Restoration to preserve heritage or a significant local landmark for generations to see in the future and preserving the local identity of an area.
- Evaluating damaged property affected by a local disaster and supporting the rebuild to benefit the end user and help them rebuild their lives.
- Supporting local schools, colleges and universities through student competitions, talks and field trips to safe environments to motivate students and make careers in the Built Environment seems more accessible.

2) Reactive Approach

This is often brought about by excellent communication with CABE Members from your Region, and encouraging them to inform you of their activities.

The Reactive approach is usually more ad-hoc, so you will only know about PR-worthy activities until you are told, which can mean that you'll need to react in a shorter timescale to gain PR.

Some industry relevant examples of a reactive approach to gaining PR:

- A Member has been awarded for their work, published a paper, innovated or designed something new.
- Profile a Member who has been working on a significant national or local project.
- A newsworthy incident has occurred where local members have had an input or have been called on for expertise.
- Responding from an informed perspective to local news items.

The examples given in both the Proactive and Reactive Approaches to organising PR Activities may be items that our Members do in their day-to-day roles as Building Engineers or may be voluntary activities. Either way, these sorts of examples always make for a good PR story as you are making something good, from something bad or encouraging or motivating people and raising awareness of the profession and CABE.

It is also possible to gain a small amount of PR through activities not related to the Built Environment however the amount of coverage we are likely to receive will be very minimal.

Target Audience

The target audience refers to those who will read about your PR Activity. Generally, this will be the local community and other industry professionals.

Keep the target audience simple such as 'members of the public in a given area'. You don't need to make things too complicated by going into demographics as PR is more about communicating positive news to the masses.

Before planning your PR activity, you need to think about who your target audience will be, so think about:

- Who directly benefits from the PR Activity?
- Who would benefit from knowing about the PR Activity?
- Whose perceptions do we want to improve or change?
- Any other relationships to consider?
- What is the CABE viewpoint which is being presented?

Communication Channels

For PR, you need to think about mass communication channels that your target audience is likely to have access to. More often than not, this includes local media, such as the Press, Radio and Television. Social media however, is also a key communication channel which is personalised and becoming increasingly localised. Take full advantage of all these channels.

Please tell us about any intended PR Activity so we can promote this in our CABE channels, which include:

- News articles on our website
- Blogs on our website
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)
- E-newsletters
- Face-to-face at events

If your region is joining or partnering with another organization in terms of a PR Activity, they may have their own PR plan. See if you can join forces.

Time Sensitive

All PR Activity is time sensitive, so we need to act quickly to make the most of an opportunity to gain publicity. If we leave stories a weeks or a few days after the event, it become 'old news' and may have already been published by other organisations.

We need to be quick off the mark.

Your PR Activity Checklist

- 1) Be proactive and start planning some PR Activities in your Region. Think about
 - a. The Organisation
 - b. PR Activity – must be newsworthy!
 - c. Target Audience
 - d. Communication Channels
- 2) Tell CABA HQ about your planned PR Activities and we will provide you with contact details for your local media stations e.g. radio, press and TV. We will also promote your PR stories through our communication channels.
- 3) Be reactive too and listen out for opportunities that come your way.
- 4) Tell CABA HQ about any additional PR Activities and we'll do what we can to promote these as well.

PR Opportunities through Giving Comment

At HQ, we may be approached by media stations to give comment on certain news. When this happens, we will contact the Regional Committees to see if there is someone locally who can give comment.

We also encourage you to put together a letter as a Regional Committee to contact local media with relevant information, should they need someone to give comment on a local project that's relevant to the Built Environment.

PR Do's and Don'ts

PR Do's

- If you're unsure of anything, do contact CABA HQ for advice.
- Do plan in advance where possible.
- Do stick to the facts. Don't exaggerate.
- Do give your professional opinion.
- If you are a CABA Chartered Member, tell the media that you are a Chartered Building Engineer.
- Do tell CABA HQ about your PR Activity.

PR Don'ts

- Don't tell one media organisation about another media organisation's coverage of your news.
- Don't make any unsubstantiated claims.
- Don't claim your views represent those of CABA, as they are your own professional views.
- Don't sit on an opportunity and let time lapse.
- Don't steam ahead and send PR stories directly to media without first getting approval from CABA HQ.