OVERVIEW

• Customary starting point for a comprehensive public relations program
• Valuable element of research, planning, fact-finding
• Includes review of public relations and other marketing communications efforts
Why Conduct an Audit?

- Provide objective review of an organization’s communications efforts
- Highlight strengths/weaknesses
- Uncover areas of need
- Validation of current activities
- Set a baseline
When Should You Conduct an Audit?

An audit can be useful at any time but it is most useful when:

- Management senses something is wrong
- An organization changes directions
- Management changes
- Launching a first-time public relations program
What Does an Audit Include?

• Interview process
  – Key management
  – Representative samples of internal audiences
  – Representative samples of external audiences
Interview Process

- Written questionnaire
- Special considerations for each audience
- Consistent responses
Who Makes Up the External Audience?

• Community influentials
• News media
  – Traditional
  – Select social
• Business leaders
• Public officials
• Industry organizations
• Others
Evaluation of Communications

• Employee newsletters
• Speeches
• Brochures
• News releases
• Special events
• Contributions/CSR activities
• Other
Common Questions

• Are there written communications objectives?

• Is there a written communications plan?

• What is the organization trying to communicate?
Most Importantly ...

• Are the messages understandable and believable?

• Are the messages consistent from one public to another?
Formal Research

• Random sampling
  – Written or email survey
  – Phone calls

• Focus groups
Preliminary Analysis

- Findings are compiled into a preliminary report shared with key management
- Minor revisions are made
- Final copies are made and distributed to managers for action
What Does the Final Report Contain?

• Introduction and overview
• Description of methodology
• Executive summary of findings
• Analysis of opinions and perceptions
• Series of recommendations for moving forward
Next Steps

Typically, an audit will lead to the development of a detailed public relations plan with:

• Goals and objectives
• Strategies and tactics
• Message recommendations
• Timelines
• Budget
Background

• Second largest library system in RM region
• More than half the county residents hold a library card
• Broad, diverse collection with print, online, audio/visual
• Modern technology offerings
• Popular community events
Primary Challenge

Remaining relevant in the Age of the Internet
Research

• Primary (formal) research
  – Library patrons
  – Supporters
  – Community members
  – Ethnic groups
  – Seniors
Research

• Secondary (informal) research
  – Conducted by Ayers Public Relations
  – One-on-one interviews with select library personnel and all trustees
  – Written survey to all employees
  – Quasi-focus group/brainstorming sessions with library management
Key Findings

• The Library enjoys an excellent reputation with both internal and external audiences

• Uncertainty exists with how the Library can maintain its relevance when information is available via computer at the touch of a button
Program Planning

• Establish understanding among community members that the Library is a unified organization providing single-source access
• Create a consistent, modern brand for the Library
• Increase usage of system-wide libraries
Program Planning

• Build awareness of Library offerings and its brand promise among patrons and the community at-large

• Encourage participation and input by internal audiences

• Create a consistent, modern look and feel for the Library’s numerous communications tools
Public Relations Execution

• Develop a comprehensive plan
• Identify key audiences
• Create new visual and tagline
• Craft messages underscoring relevance
• Determine appropriate communications channels
• Evaluate results
Results

• Underscored the fact that the Library was part of a system
• Increase in issuance of library cards
• Consistent branding across related entities including Foundation, Friends and others
Recap

A communications audit is a launch-point for a new or reinvigorated public relations program

- Engage a broad range of stakeholders
- Include both primary and secondary research
- Compile findings into a report
- Use the report to build and/or modify a public relations program
- Analyze results, tweak program as required
QUESTIONS?
Thank You!

Sydney Ayers, APR, Fellow PRSA
Ayers Public Relations
Golden, Colorado
Phone: 303-324-3880
Web: www.ayers-pr.com
Twitter: SydneyAyers
Linked In: in/SydneyAyers