

Mini-Project #1

Definition of Public Relations

Background:

People have many different definitions of what we mean by "public relations." No single definition has been accepted as being the only or best one for the profession. But several have been proposed by various organizations and authors, and still others are held by average men and women. The purpose of this assignment is for you to explore the meaning of public relations and come to your own understanding. This is important as you begin your professional studies, because ultimately the way you understand public relations will have a lot to do with the contributions you will make and the benefits you will derive from the profession.

Assignment:

- 1 **Part One:** Interview five friends, relatives or acquaintances. Two of these may be students in another major. Three should be non-students who currently or in the past have been employed. Each of the five should be older than age 18. Ask each to explain what s/he thinks public relations does or accomplishes. Record or paraphrase each response in 25 to 50 words. Type these responses. Include a one-line description of the person you interviewed (including sex, age, and occupation/major).
- 2 **Part Two:** Consult five books, web sites or periodicals. Three of these should be public relations-oriented. The two others should be from a related discipline such as journalism, marketing, advertising, etc. Copy a definition of public relations from each of these sources. These should be formal definitions or full explanations, not simply passing references. Include the title, author and publication date of each, according to APA. Do not cite sources older than 12 years.
- 3 **Part Three:** Think about your own understanding of Public Relations. Create a comprehensive definition that you find encompasses this understanding. This definition may include thoughts similar to those in other definitions, but it must be your own phrasing.
- 4 **Part Four:** Discuss how you think your definition in Part Three relates to both the common definitions you discovered in Part One and the more formal ones you found in Part Two. Specifically, discuss three questions: How is your definition similar? How is it different? What are the merits of the various versions?

Presentation:

This assignment should be typed with double spacing. Clearly label each part (as outlined above) with boldface type or an underline.

Evaluation:

Part One: 15 points (completion)

Part Two: 15 points (completion)

Part Three: 30 points (thoroughness, thoughtfulness, professional insight)

Part Four: 30 points (logic and thoroughness of discussion for each element)

Mechanics: 10 points (language usage, punctuation, spelling, appearance)