



Lawyers' Committee  
for Human Rights



ABA RULE OF LAW INITIATIVE

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND  
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION  
**HANDBOOK**

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**For the publisher:**

Katarina Golubović

**This handbook was developed by**

Marina Tuneva

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1 The project is implemented in the Western Balkan region in cooperation with five partner organizations: Human Rights Lawyers' Committee (YUCOM) in Serbia, Tirana Legal Aid Association (TLAS) in Albania, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, in RS-Bosnia and Herzegovina, Balkan Group for Public Policy Research (BGPPR) in Kosovo and Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in the Republic of Macedonia.

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# 1. PUBLIC RELATIONS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR THE BAR ASSOCIATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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The free flow of information, open dialogue and the trust are crucial for establishing an effective public communication. Public support and the understanding represent a direct advantage of effective public relations. Therefore, it is extremely important that the individuals who shall communicate on behalf of the Bar Association of the Republic of Macedonia (BARM) regularly assess the environment in which they communicate and identify communication opportunities. This will ensure that the essential information is conveyed to the public.

It is of utmost importance to understand that public relations represent a process that consists of several steps, of which the most important are: the situational analysis, understanding the needs and expectations of the audience, as well as BARM's communication objectives.

At the core of public relations lies the basic idea that the underlying goal is to build mutually beneficial relations between the Bar Association and its diversified audiences. It is possible to reach an understanding, to convey an information, to respond to the needs of the environment and manage the perceptions by means of an open, interactive communication and understanding.



## 2. PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

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The principal goal of any Public Relations Strategy is to create or to change a particular opinion/an attitude of a certain audience. Public Relations program activities are aimed at informing the target audience about BARM's activities and why their work is important.

The main types of Public Relations Strategies are *media relations, organizing and managing meetings and special events, advertising and direct mail sending*.

In essence, the *media relations* refer to communicating with printed, electronic and online media on specific issues, in order to provide understandable, supporting and satisfactory information to the target audience. *Meetings and special events* enable a comprehensive presentation of a topic/issue, enable direct participation and promote benevolence among the target groups. *Direct mail sending* enables immediate communication and potential collaboration with the stakeholders. *The advertising* involves paying for the broadcast of a certain message on specific media.

Our main focus in this Handbook shall be the media communications and the tools applicable in this area.

### MEDIA RELATIONS

Media relationships can take many forms. Thus, the following tools can be used in establish contacts with the media:

Please find below the list of the main tools to be used in contacts with the media. These include:

- ▶ Press Release
- ▶ Press Conference
- ▶ Media Advisories
- ▶ Fact-Sheet
- ▶ Media Proposal or a Persuasive Letter
- ▶ Media Briefing
- ▶ Media Events (Reception, Media Tours, Entertainment)
- ▶ An Interview.



## **PRESS RELEASE: Writing and distributing**

The press release is one of the most commonly used PR tools. In essence, the press release is a simple text whose primary purpose is to distribute information to the public.

The press release can be used in the following situations:

- ▶ To announce something that will take place soon
- ▶ When the media are informed about the completion of a cycle of events or a more significant issue of public interest
- ▶ To promote results from researches, surveys, analyses, etc.
- ▶ To present something new about an event that has already happened
- ▶ To express opinions regarding significant social developments
- ▶ To inform the public about an issue that is considered important and of public interest.

Prior to writing a press release, a number of questions have to be answered, in order to structure the press release adequately and to focus it towards achieving a certain goal.

- ▶ What is the key message to be conveyed through the press release? What are the key points to be remembered?
- ▶ To whom should the press release be addressed or which are the key target groups?
- ▶ What will the target audience receive from the content presented through the press release? How will their needs and expectations be met? How will their problems be solved?
- ▶ What is the purpose of the press release?

### ***What Should a Press Release contain?***

The press release should be written in a form of news, where the most recommended one is the “inverted pyramid” method. It represents structuring of the news in a manner that indicates that each subsequent paragraph is less important than the previous one. This gives the media editor, who is under time pressure, the opportunity to shorten the story in the press release without losing its basic theme/idea.

In order to make it appealing to the journalists, you have to start with a topic of interest to the media, and then proceed by explaining your ideas and information.

Each announcement should answer five basic questions: “Who”, “What”, “Where”, “When” and “Why.” Sometimes the question “How” is added (gives a description of the manner and the conditions under which the event took place).

- ▶ Who: The subject of the story. The entity-BARM, an individual, an event or an activity-must be defined and described;
- ▶ What: The news that the media must learn about;
- ▶ Where: If it concerns a press conference or an event, where will it take place? Be specific about the location-you may need to add a map of directions;
- ▶ When: When will the event be held? The date, day of the week and the specific time.
- ▶ Why: Why is this story or event important? The reason for sending your press release must be convincing.

In case when these questions cannot be responded the press release may be ambiguous, incorrect and it will fail to meet your objective. The answer to the question “Why” is particularly important. Please provide the answer in the press release below (after the quote, if you have one). Please consider that when a reader or a listener comes across a press release, they might be interested in how it relates to him/her. Try to answer that question and gain the potential audience!

Choose a title that shall attract attention or one that shall provide enough explanation for the subsequent content. The basic rule for a press release is the same that applies for the news: the most important thing has to be expressed at the beginning, if possible, in the first sentence or in the first two or three sentences, which all together create the lead news (deriving from the English word “lead”, whereas the Macedonian journalism uses the term “head news”).

**Body of the press release.** These are the paragraphs of the press release arranged below the first paragraph. They are used to specify, explain and accurately present the content mentioned in the first paragraph. The details should be listed depending on their meaning and the interest they may trigger. The press release does not have to cover all the facts or statistical data related to the event. Only the most important facts should be stated. When deciding which are the most important facts, please ask yourself the following questions:

- ▶ Is this new information?
- ▶ Does the information support the attitudes we stand for or the story we are relating?
- ▶ Is the information interesting and can it be presented in an interesting manner?

**Context and background information.** This section of the announcement contains information which represents the context of a particular topic, event

or an aspect of the story, to help get a full picture of what is being written. The content in this part of the announcement is determined by the author, who estimates how important it is to specify certain information and this depends on the written topic itself.

**Quotes.** In the press release, try to stick to the facts. When quoting, you may give opinions on certain individuals, experts in the field who can make your facts and statistics meaningful. However, it is necessary to pay attention to this part of the press release in order not to overload it with long and incomprehensible quotes.

The address, phone number and other basic information should be written at the top of the page (if there is one page) or on the front page (if the press release contains more than one page).

In the press release, please specify the name of the person / coordinator whom you can contact in case additional information might be required. The date of publishing of the press release shall also be indicated. Complementing the brief press release with photos and illustrations can attract more attention, but this is optional. Do not overdo it, since it can deter the journalists. Usually, a brochure or a short document containing the most important facts would be sufficient. The entire press release should be short. In most cases, your news will not be extremely important, so limit your press release to one page (30 rows). It is advisable that the size is even smaller.

### ***Several useful tips:***

- ▶ Do not prepare a text longer than one or, maximum two pages. This reduces the likelihood that the information will be published in full. If this is the case, the readers will not be able to memorize it;
- ▶ If the material is longer than one page, at the end of the first page please write "please turn over", and after the last word "the end".
- ▶ Use short sentences (if possible, not more than 20 words).
- ▶ When quoting a name of a person, you should specify the full name, surname and the title)
- ▶ You do not write a press release for a single audience. Therefore, you have to use a language style that may be understandable for everyone that might come across your information. However, this does not imply that the style should be too simplistic. Some terms and expressions of professional jargon should be clarified.
- ▶ Use journalistic writing style to increase the opportunities for publishing the press release as it is written.

- ▶ Please check the terms to be used carefully, since the improper use of even generally accepted expressions can lead to misunderstanding and misperceptions.
- ▶ Use familiar expressions.

***Distribution of the Press Release to the Media.*** An effective press release is not only well written, but should also be delivered on time to the appropriate media/journalist.

***Follow up.*** After the press release has been delivered, contact the journalist briefly to confirm if he/she has received the announcement. Calling the journalists is the second opportunity to sell your story.

### ***Press Conference***

One of the most effective ways to promote important news or activities is by holding a press conference. The press conference is an organized event, with the participation of representatives of the organizer and media representatives.

This method of communicating your news can be simple, cheap and highly effective. However, prior to organizing such an event, it is advisable to think it over. In order to schedule a press conference, it is indispensable to have a good reason or a topic. The information to be offered at the press conference should be of great interest to the media as well as to the public.

Good reasons for organizing a press conference would be the following:

- ▶ announcing important developments
- ▶ communicating significant achievements/results
- ▶ using an opportunity (for example, a celebrity visit, an incorrect interpretation and understanding of an event, regulations, etc.)
- ▶ expressing a view on some current event
- ▶ a reaction during a crisis
- ▶ overcoming bad publicity or negative claims.

In order to conduct a successful press conference a serious preparation and organization is required. An essential element of the press conference is the news.

All journalists, i.e. the media that might be interested in the topic are to be invited at the press conference. If a medium is ignored, it can easily lead to unfavorable and in some cases, hostile relationships between the media and the organizer of the press conference. Failing to invite the media is the same as “not inviting a person to a party”.

The invitation to monitor the press conference should contain basic information regarding the topic of the event and the topic of the discussion. This would assist the editor to determine which journalist should cover the event. It is best to address the invitation to the media's editorial board or to the media editor or his deputy, because if a name of the journalist is indicated, there is a risk that the event might not be covered, due to the journalist's absence or engagement on other events.

The presence of journalists at a news conference largely depends on other events that occur during that period, which can be competitive in itself. Sometimes it means that it might be necessary to postpone the press conference and reschedule it at a different timing during the same day or even the following day/s, depending on type and the popularity of the topic.

It is recommended to prepare an information package for the journalists (often referred to as a "press kit") containing relevant materials related to the topic of the press conference. Naturally, it is crucial to decide the exact timing to distribute the press kit to the journalists. However, the journalists who are pressed for time are under the risk of taking the information package and leaving the press conference before its completion, believing that they will fully cover the event afterwards. Thus, some major points or conclusions from the press conference might be missed out, which may result in presenting an incomplete or wrong picture regarding the specific topic to the media. In that case, it is recommended that the information packages are distributed at the end of the press conference. If, however, some journalists are in a hurry and want to leave prior to the end of the press conference, the materials could be distributed during the event, therefore it is certainly beneficial to have a person appointed by the Bar Association.

The central table, where the representatives holding the press conference are to be seated, should be marked with the names and titles of each representative. This allows you to avoid misstating the names and the titles of the speakers.

It is especially important that the press conference starts at the scheduled time or 15 minutes later. If the beginning of the press conference is delayed due to the fact that some journalists who confirmed their participation might be running late, the Bar Association might run the risk of losing the media that arrived at the scheduled time.

The press conference is opened by the moderator, by a brief introduction of the representatives who will deliver short speeches, their titles or job position, as well as by making a brief explanation of the reason for convening the press conference. The moderator's introduction should not last more than 5 minutes and should not extend for more than 5-7 minutes, planned for the other speakers. Regarding the number of representatives by the organizer, it would be ideal to select three to four people, including the moderator. After the introduction, the journalists may ask questions and the speakers shall provide the answers. When it concerns individuals, who will talk on behalf of BARM, besides its employees, these can be external persons who are knowledgeable in the topic.

At the planning stage of the press conference, the organizer should try to anticipate the questions that would be asked. Naturally, in the context of this, it is necessary to anticipate all kinds of issues, even those that could be perceived as tough, especially if it concerns an issue of great interest or in some way considered to be controversial.

Although a press conference is convened on a specific topic, journalists often ask questions in other areas. It is advisable that all organizer's representatives are well prepared. If the issues do not fall within context of the press conference topic, the organizers' representatives should address their main points. Similarly, if answering a question or questions allows for a better representation of the Bar Association, of its standpoints and so on, it would be advisable that the representatives briefly use the opportunity and return to the main topic afterwards. In this case, the moderator plays a major role in carefully monitoring the course of the press conference and preventing possible change of the focus of the event.

If major deviations from the topic of the press conference are allowed, there is a great risk that BARM might present itself in inauspicious manner or worse, disclose information that is unreliable which could violate the reputation of the organizer.

It is also important to be mindful of the number of people involved in answering the questions. In practice, many people may be involved in answering questions, which could lead to confusion as to who should respond. Different views or two different answers to the same question can lead to major problems. When answering questions, the construction to be avoided is "I have no comment". However, it can be used in certain circumstances, especially when a journalist asks questions that largely deviate from the topic, or are directed at making an ungrounded threat to the personality of the individual.

This type of an answer can often be interpreted as a tendency to conceal some kind of events or information, or as insufficient knowledge in the subject matter, etc., It is in the interest of the organizer of the press conference to explain the concerns about the issues to which there are no answers or knowledge by simply admitting that fact. In situations where the organizers of the press conference do not feel confident in answering a question, it is advisable to mention that the information shall be provided after the all facts were double checked and that it would be done as soon as possible.

Another approach would be to restrict the responsibility to answer the question if it concerns something that is not in the domain of the Bar Association's work or the representatives present at the press conference. The media may not find it appealing, however, they shall understand. It is not advisable to get into disputes and debates, using negative replicas.

The press conference should not be longer than 45 minutes, but it would be better to last 30 minutes (in any case, less than an hour). It is best to be done

before journalists begin to lose interest in the topic and therefore it is necessary to follow the developments.

It is recommended to make a report on what has been achieved and what has not been achieved, as well as to write down the questions and answers in full. Journalists present at the press conference, who have registered by signing the list of participants can also receive additional materials, if they are interested or if the organizer assesses that it would be useful for them to receive current and future notification on the topic.

After the press conference, it is necessary to analyze in detail what shall be announced in the media regarding the event. It is advisable to send materials or a press release from the press conference both to journalists who did not attend the event in order to maintain continuous communication and regular exchange of information.

### ***Media advisories***

Public relations officers can send announcements to reporters and editors about a future event on which they can report. Such announcements are also used to inform the media that a person will be represented in the media or that an interview with an expert will be conducted. These forms of communication are also called 'media alerts'. A press release can also be sent to the media as attachment to these announcements.

The most common format for media announcements are short points like sub-threads, instead of long paragraphs. Usually, the one-page announcement contains the following elements: a one-line title, a short paragraph, an overview of the idea behind the story, the six journalistic questions, as well as a short paragraph indicating the person the journalist should contact for more information or how to schedule an interview.

### ***List of More Relevant Facts (Factsheet)***

Factsheets are often sent to the media as another useful public relations tool, either as part of the press kit or along with a press release. They provide additional ('background') information about a product, individual, service, or event.

The Factsheets contain key information on a topic that is to be presented in a limited space and must depict the relevant information. They often contain either statistics or answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ), or provide recommendations on how to implement certain procedures. In some cases, it may represent a summary of a longer document.

In today's era of the Internet, Factsheets are especially useful, since readers tend to seek concisely and clearly written information that could be read in a short amount of time.

Factsheets usually extend to one or two pages, in which case the journalists can be quite helpful to them in the writing of the news. Similar to the press release which is structured according to a given format, by means of answering basic journalistic questions, the same applies to the Factsheets that provide the same information, but only in bullets, avoiding the use of narrative style. Factsheets may contain biographies of the main staff, the business activity sector, etc.

Apart from communicating with the media factsheets can also be used in other circumstances, for example, in organizing events or making them available to visitors.

In a similar context to factsheets, the use of so-called 'background information' is also mentioned (from the English word "backgrounder"). This material is used in press kits or as a briefing document. It provides sufficient information on a topic to ensure that reporters are sufficiently informed before conducting an interview or using another reporting genre. Background information is a couple of page document that contains the essential information on a topic or, for example, on a biography of an individual.

### ***Media Proposal or Persuasive Letter***

A number of PR officers write a short letter or note to the editor in order to attract his/her attention. In public relations this is called a ***proposal***. The term persuasive letter is used in a similar context, which is sent to journalists and editors to encourage them to report specific events or to accept ideas about stories.

Public Relations officers use proposals or persuasive letters to ask editors to appoint certain journalist to a particular event to make a story on a given issue or trend. They do not contain all information on the story, however it should be sufficient to trigger an interest in the story. The persuasive letters should be written in a clear and concise manner and should be short.

The persuasive letter should begin with an introductory section which emphasizes why the subject matter is important and why it is interesting to report on it. You may then proceed with more specific description of the story and indicate the contact person for collecting more information. It would be best to structure the letter that would allude the journalist that he/she corresponds to reporting approach of their medium.

Key elements of the persuasive letter:

- ▶ To be brief
- ▶ To have a point
- ▶ To demonstrate the impact of your story on the wider audience



## **Media Briefing**

Briefings can serve as an effective method to reach out to journalists and provide them with information, or better, with ideas for their articles. Briefings are organized as informal communication with the media, however it represents an official meeting with them. Briefings are sometimes considered as type of a closed type press conference, however organized as an informal setting. It is not allowed to use neither digital cameras nor microphones. Journalists must not name the persons who organize the briefing, however in their future reporting they can use the institution's name as a source of information that helped them structure the report.

The term informal communication refers to the fact that the briefings are not organized as events for live reporting from the event, but rather to offer information that the journalists might use in the context of their report. According to this, the briefings which are considered as media communication tool can be used for the following purposes:

- ▶ Ongoing informing of and maintaining communication with the journalists
- ▶ to draw the attention of the journalists towards certain relevant topics or themes or activities that are going to take place in the future
- ▶ to hear out journalists' opinions on certain topics
- ▶ to offer new information on an old issue or a topic
- ▶ to become familiar with or understand certain hot topic
- ▶ to be informed of some research results or initiative
- ▶ to present some ideas or thoughts about future plans
- ▶ to assign an expert who can assist in the implementation of given activities.

The briefings represent an exceptional opportunity to introduce the journalist and to acquire experience about the interviewing process. The exchange of information during the briefing ensures more visible presence of the media.

The briefings can be organized with low costs and modest equipment. Regarding the venue, they may be organized in premises inside the institution. In case the premises are not adequate, the briefing may be held on a venue adequate to the topic or topics that are going to be discussed during the briefing.

All journalists must be invited to the briefings or the invitees shall be those who are most relevant to the topics to be discussed.

Prior to starting the briefing, it is obligatory to double check the materials that are to be used and distributed to the journalists, the points of the discussion during the meeting as well as the main topics for discussion. It is advisable to invite

the journalists who will attend the meeting personally, followed by sending an invitation in writing. One day prior to holding of the briefing, the journalists may be contacted again, to confirm their presence. Only three persons competent in transmitting the information to the journalists may participate on the part of the organizer.

The organizer should lead the discussion during the briefing, in a manner that represents a dialogue between the organizer's representatives and the journalists, instead of having an official presentation followed by questions and answers session. None of the journalists should dominate the discussion, neither any of the organizer's representatives. At the same time, it should not be allowed that any journalist dominates the discussion.

### ***Media Events (Receptions, Tours)***

The purpose of organizing a media event is to initiate the representation of the media and to extend the information, messages and standpoints of the BARM.

In a more formal text, the event could be organized in a format of a reception or tour for the media,

There are three guidelines listed below that may be useful in securing the success of the media events:

- ▶ to invite the media or the journalists who are reporting on your topic or those who are interested in doing so
- ▶ the more simple and easier the reporting on your event, the better
- ▶ to appoint a person to be ready and available to do an interview with the journalists, to socialize with them and to provide possible suggestions on how to conceive the story and promote your message.

### ***Media Reception***

There are different types of media receptions: visit to the premises of BARM, meeting outside of the premises, lunch, dinner, etc. Media representatives are invited in order to further inform the public on the work of the BARM.

The purpose of the reception is to achieve better cooperation with the media, as well as to present certain occurrences related to their everyday work. Simultaneously, by organizing this type of media event, additional information which are beneficial for their current or future operations may be obtained.

## ***Media Tours***

Media tours can be a powerful manner of obtaining support. It is important to mention that the media tours have an objective, apart from achieving results to also detect the drawbacks and the problems of the implementation of the activities or work programs.

When organizing the media tours, it is indispensable to pay attention to several important matters. First of all, the group should be smaller. At the same time, one should be mindful of which media is going to be invited, i.e. in order not to favor some journalists as opposed to others. Furthermore, it is advisable to prepare informational material containing statistical data, names of locations, which the journalists can take along after the end of the media tour. The journalists are aware that the work entails both problems and obstructions during the operations. The journalists often prefer the sharing of problems. Concealing the problems and the drawbacks might make them suspicious in the operations of the institution and make them less enthusiastic about the subject matter. Another important aspect in organizing media tours is to be mindful of the amount of funds allocated for spending on the journalists, in order to avoid the perception of possible “bribing” and the expectations from their reports in favor of the organizer.

## ***An Interview***

The interview is a commonly used communication tool for contacts with the media. This media communication tool can help you obtain public support from the community at large, by popularizing their position through their representative.

Apart from this, the interview responds to the requirements of the media. When performing their job, the journalists may request:

- ▶ discussions with recognized/popular leaders and experts in various fields
- ▶ opinions of individuals that follow the developments in their field of work, who are able to provide a standpoint in relation to the current work
- ▶ possibility to work with confidential sources of information
- ▶ persons who could discuss specific problems and issues in an easy and understandable way
- ▶ opinions that are expressed “nicely and supported by facts”
- ▶ opposing different viewpoints.

Irrespective of the type of the media in question or the interviewer, the key principle is to always maintain control over the situation.

First of all, one should decide on the purpose of the interview. In this context, the PR officer plays a major role in determining the purpose and preparing the

representative from the institution who is going to be interviewed or prepare himself/herself for conducting the interview.

When preparing the interview, the PR officer should receive as much information as possible on the objective from the journalist, in order to prepare the interviewee with the necessary facts and data to be used during the discussion. At the same time, it is advisable to consider the type of audience, understand their requirements in order to respond adequately to their topic of interest.

Despite the fact that the preparations for the TV interview are rather different, in comparison to the radio interview or interview for a printed media, it is crucial to be well prepared.

The common experience of any person preparing for an interview is the nervousness. There are many techniques to be applied in order to relax and reduce the tension, however it should not be expected that the tension will disappear fully. As we mentioned earlier, the best way to overcome the nervousness is to be well prepared. Giving an interview is something you could practice ahead of time, by explaining the purpose of the interview from different aspects, using various analogies, dynamic language and illustrations or simple data. One should consider all manners for presenting most important attitudes and select those that are considered most efficient for achieving the planned objectives.

During the contacts with the media you must be self-confident. The shyness or hesitation can easily be noticed and can leave a wrong impression both on the journalist and the audience. Being equipped with facts and data could help to overcome the fear of interviewing, as well as leaving an impression of being competent on the topic of the interview.

It is advisable to be mindful of the “traps” that the journalist could make. These trends can lead to loss of patience and bring the interviewee in a contradictory position. Even if there are such attempts, it is recommended to remain calm and focused on the messages that had to be conveyed.

The golden rule during an interview is to tell the truth. Saying either “No” or “I don’t know” is better than telling a lie.

The simple and straightforward presentation of the facts make a better impression and in turn, this reduces the likelihood of misinterpretation of what was being said, or misconception of the presented information.



### 3. PRESENTATION AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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The communication has always been understood as a skill that can be learned or improved. This is an ongoing process which entails sending and receiving information, or exchanging ideas.

The information flow does not consist only in sending, but also in receiving information and feedback on the same. Accordingly, this process does not include passive observers.

The communication dynamics can be observed in the manner of transmitting the messages. In order to achieve better understanding, the thought process should be SIMPLE. The communicator must discover a system of expressions, that would correspond with the audience and contribute to clear, specific, realistic and objective transmission of the messages. The feedback is an indicator that the message was understood.

Common reasons for misconception during the communication are:

- ▶ the message was conveyed in an unclear manner
- ▶ terminology problems
- ▶ conflict of several distinct ideas
- ▶ distracted thought process
- ▶ information overload
- ▶ lack of information
- ▶ misunderstanding or misconception of the message
- ▶ lack of knowledge on the collaborator
- ▶ absent-mindedness, lack of focus
- ▶ deliberate disinformation
- ▶ withholding information.

The questions we have to ask prior to establishing any communication are the following:

- 1) the reason for communication
- 2) whom do we communicate
- 3) how can we make ourselves available and flexible during the communication process
- 4) how can we be tactful, patient and kind during the communication
- 5) how can we make an impression on the others?

The presentations and the reports are forms of communicating ideas and information towards a group of people. A good presentation must contain:

**Content:** It contains information that are useful for the people. However, unlike the reports which are read according to the rhythm of the reader, in preparing the presentation, one should consider the amount of information the audience can absorb in one go.

**Structure:** It should have a logical introduction, body and conclusion. It has to be well developed in order for the audience to understand it. The presenter has to be careful about not losing the audience if he/she digresses from the main point of the presentation.

**Formatting:** It must be well formatted. The report can be reread and some parts may be skipped, however during a presentation the audience is left at the mercy of the presenter.

## *Voice*

When you present, the goal is to make your voice heard. Good speakers lower the tone of their voice in order to engage the audience and afterwards they raise the voice when making a point. Fast speaking shortens the words, whereas slow speech makes the words longer. The interest of the audience can be maintained only if you keep a balance of the dynamics of your speech.

Listen to your voice! Practice listening to your voice while you are at home, driving, walking, etc. Afterwards, listen to it when you are at work and notice if you use your voice in a desired manner.

## *Body*

During the presentation please engage in:

**Eye Contact:** This helps to regulate the course of the communication. It shows an interest for the others and increases the credibility of the presenter. If the presenter maintains an eye contact, then he/she opens the communication and shows an interest, concern, warmth and credibility.

### **Facial Expression:**

Smiling is a powerful way of presenting ourselves as friendly, warm-hearted and kind towards the others. They would feel more comfortable with you and would like to listen to you more.

### **Gestures:**

If you fail to make gestures during speaking, you are likely to be perceived as not interesting and boring. Speaking in a more lively manner attracts attention,

makes the presented material sound more interesting and leads to better understanding.

**Body posture and body positioning:** The way you talk and move around, you communicate numerous messages. Standing upright and bending slightly forwards communicates that you are approachable, receptive and friendly. When you and your audience face each other, it shows mutual closeness. If you turn to the audience turning your back towards them or you look down at the floor, the audience may lose the interest in the topic that you are presenting.

**Voice:** One of the strongest criticisms directed towards the presenters is that they speak in a monotonous voice. The listeners perceive this type of speaking as boring and uninteresting.

### ***Active Listening***

Good presenters not only inform the audience, but they also listen to it. By listening you get an idea whether they have understood the information and whether the information is relevant for them. **Active listening** IS NOT THE SAME as the spontaneous listening! The spontaneous listening is the first part, that means to add certain meaning to the recorded symbols. The second part, the active listening means that you should add certain meaning to the registered symbols. When the person who receives the information is not sufficiently motivated to listen attentively, it is referred to as passive listening. Effective listeners are those who:

- ▶ Spend more time listening than talking (certainly as a presenter you will speak more than usual)
- ▶ Do not finish other peoples' sentences
- ▶ They don't respond to questions by asking another question
- ▶ Avoid biases. Everyone can be biased and it is necessary to control it
- ▶ They are not busy with their thoughts while other people are speaking
- ▶ They allow others to speak and they do not dominate the conversation
- ▶ They plan their answers after others have finished speaking ... and not while they speak
- ▶ Focus fully on what others have to say, not on their answers
- ▶ Provide feedback, do not interrupt a surprise
- ▶ Analyze by addressing all relevant factors and ask questions that can be answered openly. They draw conclusions together with the person they are addressing
- ▶ They focus the conversation on what the presenter is saying ... and not on the issues of their interest.



The listening can be one of the most powerful communication tools. Therefore, please make use of it!

### ***Nervousness***

A major enemy of the presenter is the nervousness, which may affect the voice, the body posture and the spontaneity.

First and foremost, **do not resist the nervousness!** The only option is to continue with the presentation, rather than focus on the nervousness. You can consider nervousness as an incentive for an effective presentation. If you accept the nervousness, the presentation may become a challenge and your speech may become better. If you allow anxiety to overwhelm you, you may distance yourself from the audience.

### ***Questions***

Remain calm if the person asking the question does not agree with you. You are professionals. The questions do not necessarily mean that you have failed to explain the topic, but rather that their interest is higher compared to an average audience.

At the end of the presentation, always leave time for questions and answers. When answering questions, address your observations to the entire audience. In this way you shall allow everyone to stay focused and not just the person asking the question. To make your presentation more effective, try to make the link between the question and the main points or messages.

Make sure you have heard the question that was posed to you. If you do not understand it, ask them to clarify it. Take your time to think about the issue, because the answer you provide may be correct, however it may oversee the main problem. If you do not know the answer to the question, be honest and do not improvise. Tell the audience that you will contact them again and come back with an answer.

The best answer lasts from 10 to 40 seconds. If they are too short, they may appear less serious, whereas if they are very long then they may be self-explanatory. Do not allow minor issues to divert the attention of your presentation.

If someone opposes what you say, find a way to agree with him to a certain extent or with parts of his/her statement. For example, "I understand your point..."; "I'm glad you raised this issue, however ...". The idea is to show respect for their point of view or to show that you agree with them to some extent. The audience often thinks in the context of "us and them". Do not take the chance of distancing the audience from you.

## ***Preparing your Presentation***

*Failing to prepare is preparing to fail.*

Preparing a good and effective presentation requires planning. Firstly, in order to prepare a presentation, it is advisable to follow the same basic rules as preparing for a meeting. The second step is to prepare the presentation. A good presentation begins with an introduction that contains “an ice breaker” such as interesting facts, quotes, findings, etc. It is recommended to indicate the purpose of your presentation in the introduction. It will not only point to what you are going to present, but also it shall inform the audience about the purpose of your presentation.

The next thing to prepare is the body of the presentation. Do not write down every word. All you need is a sketch. By listing the main points, you will not only get a sketch, but it will serve as a checklist for your presentation. In order to prepare the presentation, ask yourself the following questions:

- ▶ What is the purpose of your presentation?
- ▶ Who shall attend the presentation?
- ▶ What does your audience already know about your topic?
- ▶ What is the attitude of the audience towards me (hostile/friendly, etc.)

A 45-minute presentation should not contain more than seven main points. This may not seem to be enough, however if you want to leave the audience with a clear understanding of what you have presented, you cannot expect them to remember more than this. There are several ways to structure your presentation:

- ▶ According to the timeframe: indicated in chronological order
- ▶ According to priority: the main points are indicated according to their relevance
- ▶ Problem/solution: presenting the problem, suggesting a solution, and highlighting the advantages
- ▶ Classification: important topics are considered as key points
- ▶ From simple to complex: ideas are cited from the simplest ones to the most complex ones. The same can be done in the reverse order.

It is recommended to include visual information, so that the audience can have a better understanding of your presentation.

The body of the presentation is followed by the conclusion. In this section you may ask questions, provide a summary and thank the participants for their attendance.

Make sure you inform the audience on what they are going to listen to (the goal), what they have been listening to (the body) and what they had listened to (the conclusion).

You have to be well prepared for your presentation, so that during the presentation you only throw a glance at your notes.

### **Few Recommendations and Techniques for Good Presentations**

- ▶ If you have a handbook, do not read from it. The audience does not know if they have to read along with you or just listen to you.
- ▶ Do not put your hands in your pockets. This can make you look unprofessional.
- ▶ Talk to the audience and do not point to the visual aids, such as a projector, flip chart, etc.
- ▶ Speak clearly and loud enough so that everyone can hear you. Do not speak with a monotonous voice.
- ▶ Listen carefully to comments and opinions. By listening to their ideas, comments and opinions you will give the impression that you respect them.
- ▶ At the beginning of your presentation make a list of your goals and discuss them. Explain to the audience how their goals fit in your presentation. Tell them what they should expect from you and you can contribute towards the achievement of their goals.
- ▶ Use examples and illustrations
- ▶ Finish on time, do not extend the time of your presentation
- ▶ Do not offer ready-made solutions. It is better to seek common solutions for the problem or favorable conditions instead of thinking that you have a ready-made solution in place
- ▶ Honesty
- ▶ Ability to be spontaneous
- ▶ No lies
- ▶ No hidden motifs
- ▶ Empathy and identifying yourself with their problems, understanding and acceptance
- ▶ Respect and mutual trust.

*Adapted contents from the textbook "Introduction to Public Relations", Tuneeva, M. (2010), High School of Journalism and Public Relations were used for the preparation of this Handbook.*

