

CHAPTER 10

EVALUATING RESULTS

PR programmes must achieve the relevant objectives otherwise the effort will be wasted. Evaluation must be done to measure whether the PR effort is successful in achieving the objectives or not.

Methods of assessment

1. **By enquiries received.** When media coverage produces direct enquiries, their number can be totalled, and if they are converted into sales, their value can also be calculated.
2. **By statistical data on audience numbers and ratings.** Press, radio and television coverage can be assessed not merely in volumes of column inches or centimetres or by time, but by exposure based on the readership figures and audience ratings. It can be calculated by how many people and what kind of people had the opportunity to read, hear or see the message.
3. **Evaluation by source.** Another method of evaluating media coverage is to give values to each newspaper or magazine and so arrive at a score for each news release issued. For an engineering story the financial times could be given a value of five, but only one for the Daily Mirror, but for a household product story the values would be deceptive whereas a value judgement could be more accurate. A media evaluation chart may be used.
4. **Opinions polls.** The shift of opinion or the extent of awareness can be measured by means of an opinion poll. If samples of relevant publics are interviewed at intervals of, for example, six months, it is possible to measure the upward or downward trend of these shifts. The target may be to secure a certain percentage shift. When the situation is surveyed initially it may be found that only 20 per cent of respondents or interviewees understand what the organisation does and the target for the PR programme may be to increase this awareness to 50 per cent over the course of a year. Surveys at six-monthly stages may be conducted. If the increase after six months is 15 per cent, at six months the result is on target. At twelve months, however, there is a shortfall of 5 per cent on the 50 per cent target. This calls for an analysis to see what went wrong.

Was the programme faulty? Was the budget too small? Were there any outside influences which prevented achievement of the target? Thus a new appreciation of the situation can help with the planning of the next leg of the campaign. Should new tactics be adopted or should the first ones be intensified? Does this call for a bigger budget? Has the environment of the organisation changed? Are there new conditions, situations or influences to contend with?

5. **Evaluations by direct statistical feedback.** If an advertising campaign follows a PR programme of educating the market, the success of the advertising can be

judged. Does the take-up of the product meet expectations and are retailers re-ordering? Better still, are sales better than when a previous new line was launched without preliminary PR?

Similarly, if a bank with branches all over the country was anxious to recruit school-leavers, made a video about the bank's services and opportunities for young people and loaned the video to schools and clubs, the success of this venture could be measured by the increase in applications for junior jobs. Application forms could actually ask if and where the video had been seen.

Again, if the bank was keen to service more farmers and showed a suitable video at agriculture shows, Young Farmers Clubs meetings and other rural events, the success of the video could be measured by the number and value of new accounts opened and other business conducted with farmers.

- 6. Media feedback.** If the media have shown misunderstanding, scepticism or hostility in the past, does feedback (press cuttings, monitored broadcasts) show that the media are now well-informed and more sympathetic? This could be the result of PR activities such as news release, photographs, feature articles, a press information service, press receptions and facility visits.
- 7. Assessing increased understanding.** As a result of publishing a dealer magazine, are dealers now better informed about the product, explaining it to customers more efficiently, giving it more display space, using display material to greater advantage, receiving the company's sales representative more warmly and placing more frequent or large orders?

