



Setting Best Practices In Public Relations Research

David Michaelson, Ph.D.

echo

GLOBAL RESEARCH PROTECTING BRANDS AND REPUTATION

The Situation Facing Public Relations Research

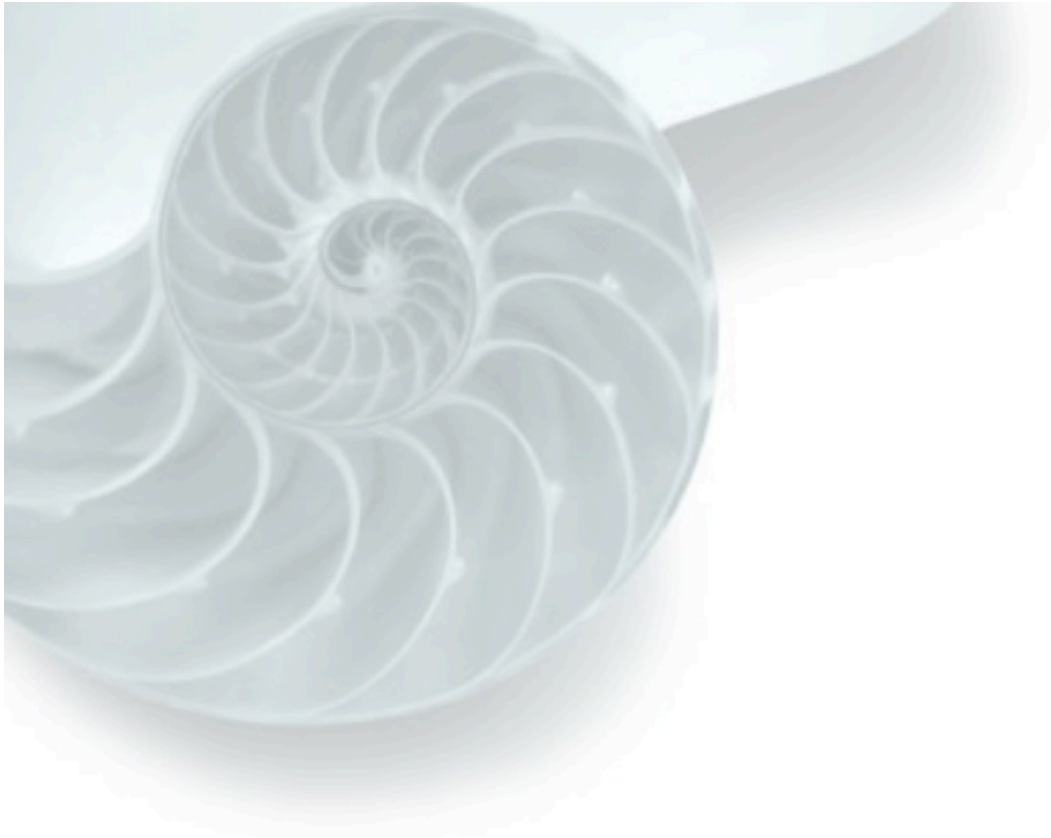
- Growing recognition of value of research in developing and evaluating of public relations programs
 - Particularly important for consumer marketing programs
- But, much of this is value is never realized in the marketplace

Why Is This Happening?

- Many possible explanations:
 - Lack of resources
 - Lack of management commitment
 - Lack of understanding of benefits
 - Lack of specific knowledge
 - Concerns about cost – *particularly for established brands*
- But, another factor also contributes significantly to this situation

Why Is This Happening?

- Primary reason for lost value is very basic:
 - Lack of understanding by practitioners of **Best Practices** or fundamental research principles
- Problem exists throughout public relations industry regardless of geography
 - Agencies
 - Clients
 - Government
- Lost value is particularly significant in product marketing



The Concept of “Best Practices”

echo

GLOBAL RESEARCH PROTECTING BRANDS AND REPUTATION

What Are “Best Practices”?

- “**Best Practice*** is a management idea which asserts that there is a technique, method, process, activity, incentive or reward that is more effective at delivering a particular outcome than any other technique, method, process, etc.
- The idea is that with proper processes, checks, and testing, a project can be rolled out and completed with fewer problems and unforeseen complications.”

*SOURCE: Wikipedia

Why Are “Best Practices” Important?

- “Best practices are simply the best way to perform a business process. They are the means by which leading companies achieve top performance, and they serve as goals for other companies that are striving for excellence.”*

*SOURCE: PricewaterhouseCoopers

What “Best Practices” Are Not

- Best practices are not the definitive answer to a business problem.
- They are a source of creative insight for improving your business.



“Best Practices” In Public Relations Research

echo

GLOBAL RESEARCH PROTECTING BRANDS AND REPUTATION

“Best Practices” In Public Relations Research

- Ten “**Best Practices**” in two key areas
- Each is a guideline that directs researchers and public relations practitioners to make “smart” choices when deciding when and how to conduct studies

Key Areas for “Best Practices”

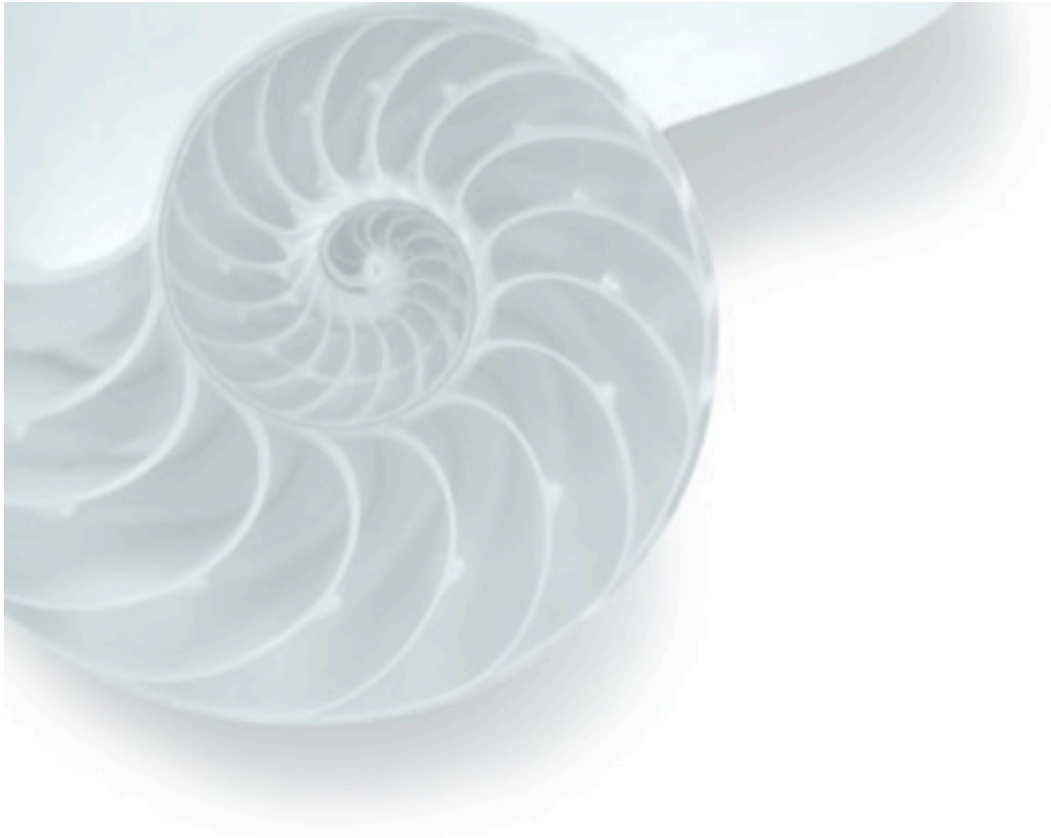
- Research methods
- Quality and substance of findings

Research Methods

1. Clear and well defined research objectives
2. Rigorous research design that meets highest standards of research methods
3. Reliable research results demonstrated by statistical testing
4. Detailed supporting documentation
 - Full transparency

Quality And Substance Of Findings

1. Demonstrates effectiveness of public relations activities
2. Public relations outputs linked to outcomes
3. Findings aid in development of better communications programs
4. Data demonstrates impact on business outcomes
5. Cost effective
6. Applicable to a broad range of public relations activities



Research Methods

echo

GLOBAL RESEARCH PROTECTING BRANDS AND REPUTATION

Clear & Well Defined Research Objectives

- Is the information need clear?
- Are the audiences well defined?
- Is there a plan for how the findings from the study will be used?
- Is management prepared to take action based on the findings?
- Are business objectives being met?

Rigorous Research Design That Meets Highest Standards

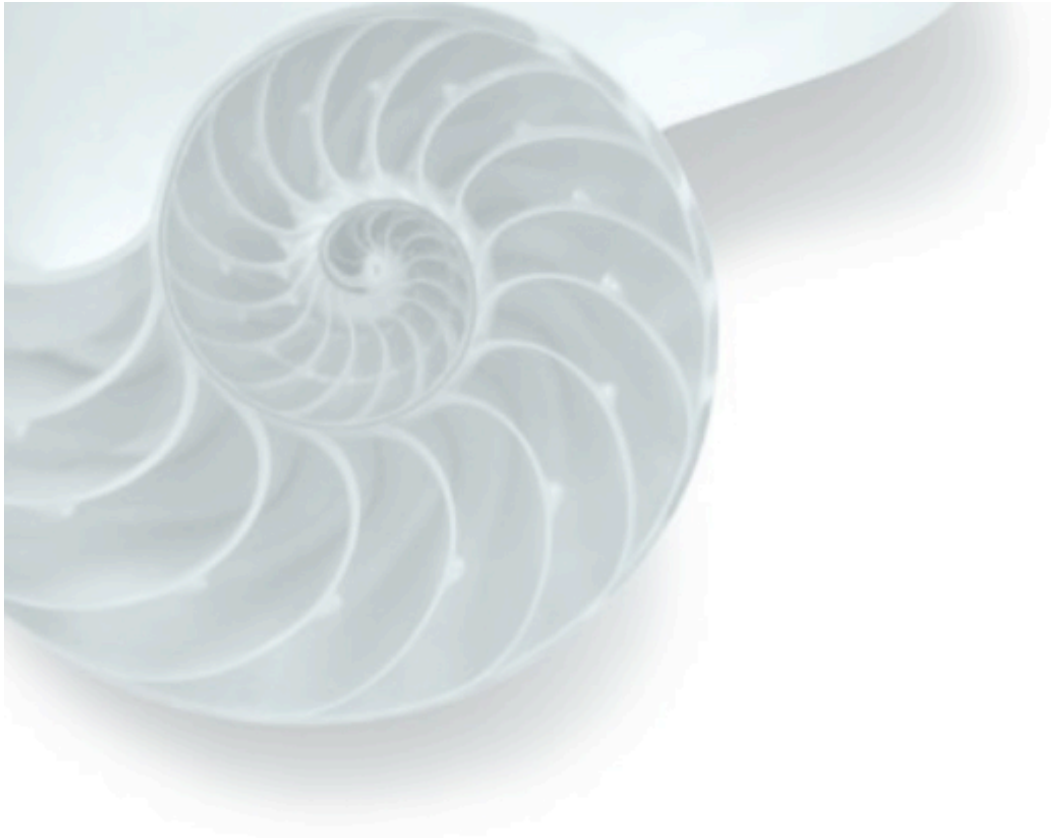
- Is the sample well defined?
- Are respondents randomly selected?
- Are the appropriate statistical tests used?
- Is the questionnaire unbiased?
- Is the data presented accurately?
- Are appropriate sample sizes used?
- Is the data tabulated correctly?
- Is qualitative research used appropriately?

Reliable Research Results

- Is the data randomly collected?
- Are the appropriate tests used?
- Can the study findings be replicated through independent testing?
- Are questions phrased appropriately?
- Is the data tabulated correctly?

Detailed Supporting Documentation

- Is the research method described fully?
- Is the questionnaire and other data collection instruments available for review?
- Is the full data set available if requested?



Quality & Substance

echo

GLOBAL RESEARCH PROTECTING BRANDS AND REPUTATION

Demonstrates Effectiveness

- Shows the impact of a message, program or campaign
- Provides diagnostic information to improve program performance
- Serves as a benchmark to gauge future performance

Outputs Linked To Outcomes

- Does the research examine the entire public relations process?
 - Communications objectives
 - Media relations
 - Media placement
 - Impact on the target audience

Aid Development Of Communications Programs

- Is a diagnostic element built in that provides insight and direction to improve program performance?
- Is the research conducted early in the program to take advantage of the information?

Demonstrates Impact On Business Outcomes

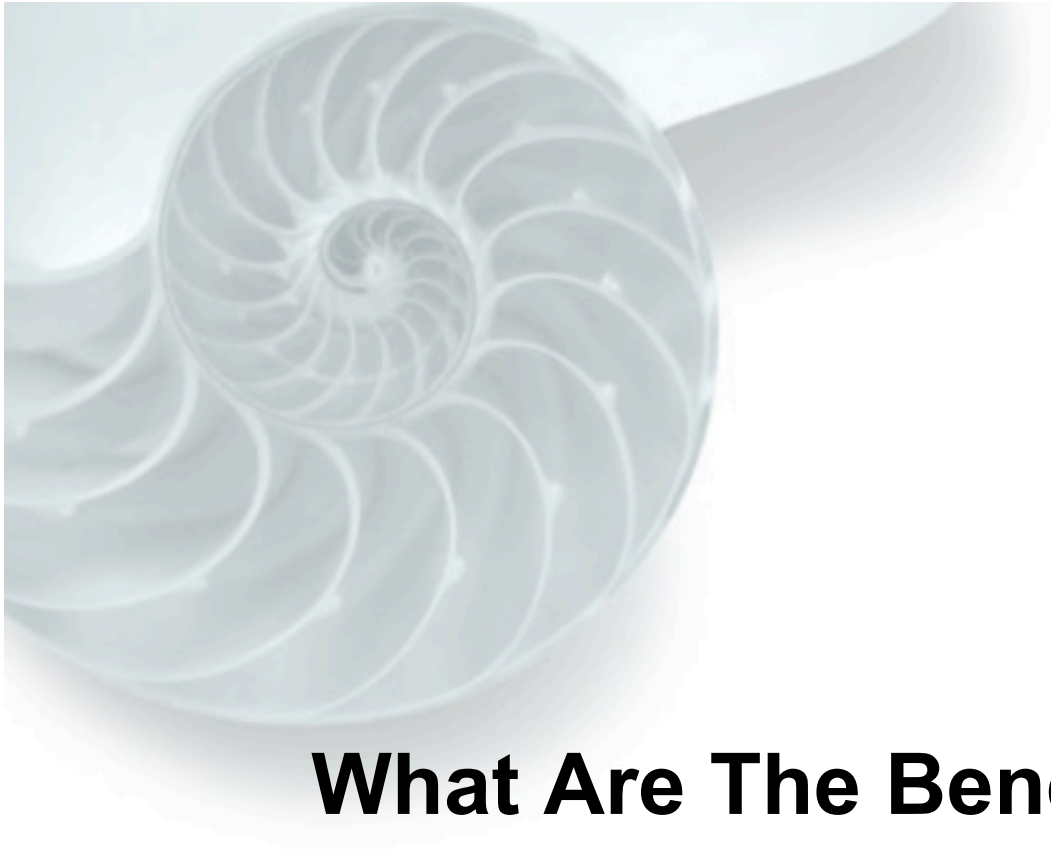
- Did the product sell as a direct result of the public relations program?
- Were attitudes changed?
- Did reputations improve?
- Did the public relations effort contribute to overall success?

Cost Effective

- Was the return for conducting the research program greater than the actual cost of the research itself?
 - Short-term
 - Long-term
- Did the research enhance the effectiveness of the public relations efforts?

Applicable To Broad Range Of Activities

- Is the information gathered applicable to other areas?
 - New product development
 - Other marketing communications methods
 - Corporate reputation
 - Multi-year efforts



What Are The Benefits Of Following “Best Practices”

echo

GLOBAL RESEARCH PROTECTING BRANDS AND REPUTATION

Benefits of “Best Practices”

- Actionable results
- Reliability of findings
- Improved decision-making
- Comparability of findings from case-to-case
- Applicability of findings to other situations
- Consistent quality



How Should “Best Practices” Be Implemented?

echo

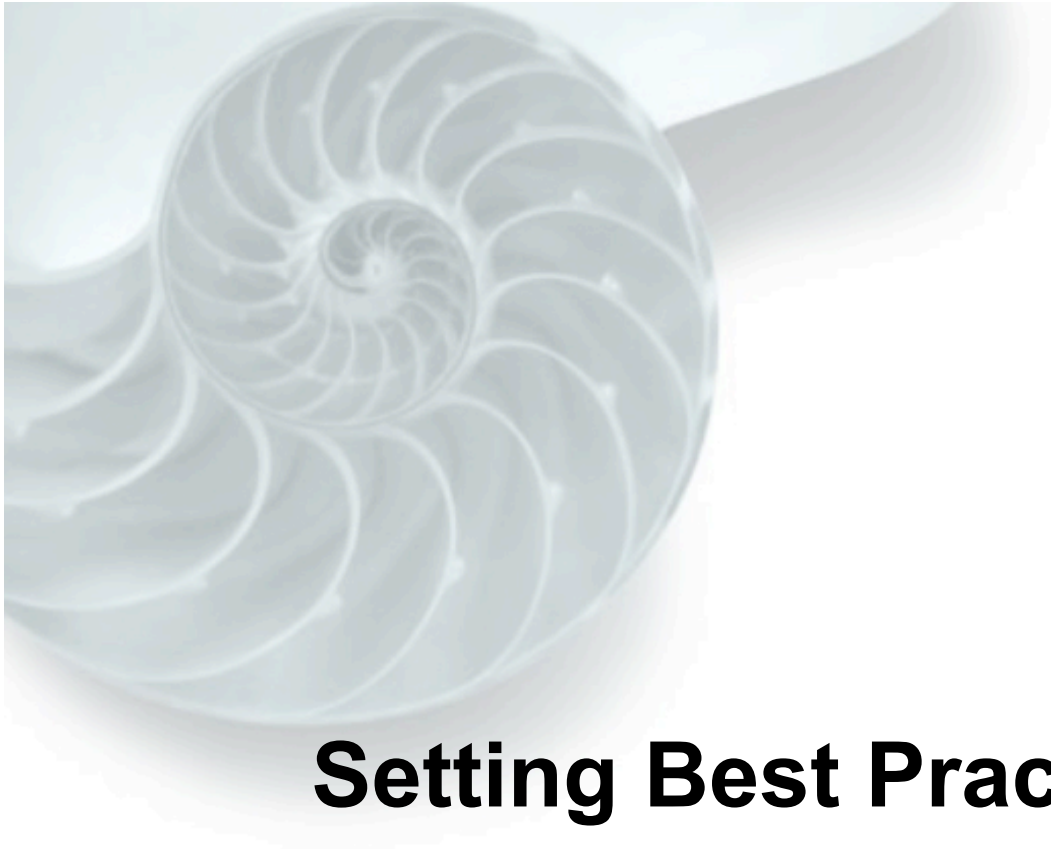
GLOBAL RESEARCH PROTECTING BRANDS AND REPUTATION

How Should “Best Practices” Be Implemented?

- Research, including measurement and evaluation as well as formative research, needs to be part of every public relations program
- Specific individuals should have special responsibility within their organizations to know “**best practices**” and to assure they are followed

How Should “Best Practices” Be Implemented?

- There is no “standard” that applies to all situations
 - But, there is a set of “**Best Practices**” that can guide decision-making
- Agencies need to understand “**Best Practices**” and implement them in their day-to-day operations
- Clients need to know about the existence of “**Best Practices**” and demand they be used



Setting Best Practices In Public Relations Research

David Michaelson, Ph.D.

echo

GLOBAL RESEARCH PROTECTING BRANDS AND REPUTATION



www.echoresearch.com

Offices in: NEW YORK • LONDON • PARIS

Echo Research Inc 330 Madison Avenue 6th Floor New York NY 10017 US
T +1 646 495 5416 F +1 646 495 5420 E Info@us.echoresearch.com