



Edited by:
Daniela Kleinschmit and
Max Krott

Public Relations for Forest Science

IUFRO Task Force Public Relations
IUFRO-SPDC



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Göttingen, August 2004*



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How to Use this Manual

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How to Use this Manual

This manual is primarily intended for use by forest scientists who want to communicate their research results to various forest stakeholder groups including the public at large. It will also serve PR officers and research managers in the field of forest science to learn from other experts and refine their own skills in communicating forest research. The manual covers the most important concepts and methods in the field of public relations and presents these in an easy to understand manner. This will allow the non-experts in the public relations field to apply these tools as an effective means of interacting with forest stakeholders and the general public, and in this way dealing with the constant changes in society. The authors are convinced that through this manual users will be motivated and inspired to involve the public for the dissemination of scientific knowledge related to forests and trees.

To gain in-depth information on PR the reader may want to use the book by just following the order of the individual chapters starting with the general rules for successful public relations and introductory information about different communication fields, followed by the description of specific success stories. But this manual is also well suited for those readers who just want to satisfy specific information needs – they may want to select individual sections of the manual. These information needs may be related to general public relations instruments and tools, factors for successful public relations work or local or regional experience made with public relations activities in various parts of the world as described in the success studies.

We wish all users of this manual a success story of their own in communicating forest science and encourage you to put forward any questions and comments you might have.

Please send your feedback to:

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Successful Communication of Forest Science

3

Successful Communication of Forest Science

However, research results will not be taken up by policy makers and forest managers unless they are properly communicated. ◀

Forests are important to people worldwide. Threats to forest ecosystems caused by excessive human development activities such as land conversion, logging or mining frequently spark public concern as these activities may have a negative influence on the many economic, social, and environmental services provided by forests.

Forest scientists all over the world play an important role in identifying potential forest threats and in working towards creating innovative solutions for the sustainable management and conservation of forests. However, research results will not be taken up by policy makers and forest managers unless they are properly communicated.

Until recently, the communication of research results has largely been confined to publishing in specialised research journals, which are almost exclusively read by the science community. Few stakeholders only have been in a position to adapt and apply research results in the field. However, this situation is gradually changing: An increasing number of forest researchers who wish to make a significant contribution to the maintenance and improvement of forests, have become aware of the fact that it is vital not only to conduct high quality research but also to expand their communication efforts to reach a wide array of stakeholders including decision-makers, forest managers, rural people and the general public in order to reach that end.

Besides the transfer of research results to the field, forest scientists also need to communicate with the public in order to obtain their acceptance. Broad public support helps strengthen the scientist's position and increases his level of influence on decision making processes. This is particularly important in times of scarce financial resources when forest scientists need the support of allies from other parts of society, in order to obtain the necessary funding for maintaining research capabilities and conducting relevant research projects.

Effectively communicating research results to the public needs to be guided by the realisation that laypersons generally are not interested in details of the scientific process and results. Consequently, PR activities of individual forest scientists or research institutions aim at creating - among various stakeholder groups - confidence and credibility in their scientific and technical qualifications. As a result, the laypersons will turn to the institutions of their confidence with questions and problems concerning the forests. The recipients of communication will, thus, become partners and allies of the forest scientist.

Successful public relations activities lead to enhanced recognition of forest science within society. Even if the scientist or the research institution is already well known, their corporate image can be strengthened or changed if necessary. Well designed strategies for cooperating with the media, such as newspapers, radio or television effectively support this objective as such media reach a large public. Additionally, direct communication with special target groups encourages the successful transfer of scientific knowledge about forests.

The target groups of PR and communication activities may vary substantially depending on the objectives to be pursued. If, for example, a better working atmosphere is to be created among members of an organisation, it will be necessary to launch an "internal communication" process applying various tools such as Intranet or an employees' newsletter.

With "external communication" tools such as brochures or newsletters public actors like business customers, politicians, administration, other research institutions, students or forest managers can be reached. Communication with these groups is possible either directly or indirectly with the help of the media. Communicating with the media itself requires special rules and methods.

One of the aims of the IUFRO Task Force on "Public Relations for Forest Sciences" coordinated by Prof. Max Krott (Göttingen University, Germany), is to contribute to the development and promotion of effective PR strategies in forest science. This manual has been compiled by Task Force members from all over the world, including scientists and PR experts in forest research. These experts present their own experiences and provide insight into successful implementation of key public relations activities in forest science.

This manual is firstly intended for forest scientists who want to communicate their research results to the public. It could also be useful for PR officers in the field of forest science in order to obtain input from other experts. The manual describes the content of public relations in an easy-to-understand way, and is addressed to those of us who are not experts in public relations but who would like to implement these tools as an effective form of opening up to the general public and as a way of dealing with the constant changes in society.

In the first part of the manual general, easily understandable and clear rules for a better communication are summarized and a list of the different PR instruments is given which are described in the following parts of the manual.

The second part of the manual deals with the four different areas of Public Relations, namely Internal Communication, External Communication, Media Communication and Internet Communication and provides descriptions of different instruments: how they should be implemented and who could be reached by their usage. For a better illustration these descriptions are linked to the success stories. Recommendations for further reading are offered.

A selection of success stories showing feasible, proven and successful Public Relation activities in forest science forms the third and final part of this book. The success stories are based on experiences from all over the world, from different research organizations and include diverse instruments. Everyone who is looking for communication ideas may find an example therein, tailored to his/her specific needs.



Rules for Successful Communication

4

Rules for Successful Communication

Public relations measures succeed differently. A whole range of factors is responsible for the process. The main target of this manual is to identify the factors with great impact on successful communication. ◀

Below central rules for successful communication are described. They are extracted from the different success stories and from communication and policy theory. The order makes no statement about the importance of the different rules.

Linking the success stories under each rule doesn't mean that these stories are the only ones containing the respective success factor, but they emphasise it more than the others do.

1. Define your Identity

Before starting any kind of communication process it is necessary to find out who you are or who you want to be. Become aware of the needs your organisation has and the targets it wants to reach. Not all of them can be achieved with the help of communication. But the objective of public relations measures must derive from the general targets. Knowing your identity is the first step in building up an image.

*Definition
of Identity*

Link: Success Stories 1, 2, 9, 10, 12

2. Build up coalitions

Organisations with the same interests can be helpful partners. You can share ideas, experience and information. The symbiotic effect of pooled dedication creates a win-win situation. Collaborative communication helps to achieve success more readily, because of the enlarged power and the better awareness.

*Building
coalitions*

Link: Success Stories 8, 9, 10

3. Identify Your Target Group

Identifying Target Groups

“The public” doesn’t exist. There are different parts of public to whom you can talk to. Each of them needs to be addressed in a different way. Find out who is important to achieve your objectives and who is helpful to legitimise yourself. After making out the target group adapt your communication behaviour. Sometimes direct communication is not the only way to reach your target group. Multipliers often offer a chance to communicate effectively to a limited audience with similar characteristics. They spread the information for you and because it’s not you talking about yourself, the information is more credible.

Link: *All Success Stories*

4. Communication Is an Interactive Process

Interactive Communi- cation

Communication is not just sending a message. The communication process starts with listening. If you listen to the stakeholders you find out about their demands and wishes. Including this knowledge in your messages is the first step towards a participative communication process. Stakeholders actively involved in your actions will be the best multiplier for your ideas. Be careful with interests not fitting yours. In this case, participation will make your business difficult.

Link: *Success Stories 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12*

5. Strategy Is Needed

Communi- cation Strategy

Public relations are a well planned, organised and accomplished work. Ad hoc actions are only in exceptional cases target-oriented. Whatever public relation instruments you use – it needs preparation time to adapt it to general and subordinate objectives, to target groups and to the other used communication instruments.

Link: *Success Stories 6, 12*

6. Use the Window of Opportunity

The timing of communication is related to the effectiveness of communication. Although you provide interesting and important information, nobody will pay attention if you publish it on a day something extraordinary happens. Topics of high public attention bear a good chance for the publication of your message if you connect one with the other.

Window of Opportunity

Link: *Success Stories 4, 9*

7. Provide Confidence

Most of the audience are lay people in your field. Keep your message simple and easily understandable for everybody and don't try to go into details. The main target should be to provide confidence in forest science. If someone wants to know more details he should remember you as the expert and know how to contact you. Characterize yourself and your organisation as problem solvers.

Provide Confidence

Link: *Success Stories 2, 6, 9, 11*

8. Use Expert Knowledge about Public Relations

Although everybody is communicating every day it is a field of activity for experts. If possible, use the chance to consult a public relations specialist concerning your communication targets and the application of instruments.

Expert Knowledge

Link: *Success Stories 1, 2, 6, 7, 8*

9. Give Public Relations Top Priority

Communicating forest science can be done by nearly every scientist with the help of experts. Nevertheless, the management of the scientific

**High
Priority
of Public
Relations**

organisation should be involved in the communication process. The management of your science organisation is responsible for the conception of the identity and the desired image. Without this overview, different communication actions run the risk of being inconsistent.

Link: Success Stories 11, 12

10. Produce Events

**Produce
Events**

If you want to gain acceptance and confidence for your research field you will have to produce events for the public. Waiting for a good story to tell is not enough. An increasing amount of public messages are produced. Less and less genuine events get public attention. It's not necessary to raft with a little rubber dinghy on the ocean surrounded by broadcasting teams like Greenpeace. Inaugurations of new laboratories, invitation of guest speakers e.g. arranged under the rules of the media, are in many cases successful.

Link: Success Story 5

11. Make Your Message Worth Publishing

**Media =
Gatekeeper**

Lots of messages compete for public attention. The media is the gatekeeper selecting newsworthy stories from others. A message is newsworthy if it includes news factors that get a lay audience interested in the story. Well known news factors are notables, topicality, surprise, negativism, success, personalisation and nearness. According to the target group you want to reach with your message the importance of the different news factors diverge. The more news factors you use the merrier.

Link: Success Stories 1, 5

12. Give Them a Reason to Talk about Themselves

Like other persons or organisations the media likes to talk about itself. Give them a chance to do this with the help of your message. For example a press release about a new communication instrument like a web page is a good message for the media because it emphasises the importance of providing information for the public. Use the opportunity to enhance the attention to one public relations instrument through the use of another.

*Give Them
a Reason
to Talk
about
Themselves*

Link: *Success Stories: 2, 5, 7, 10, 12*

13. Make Informal Contacts

The application of different “formal” public relations instruments like e.g. press releases, web pages, newsletters is necessary but insufficient. Informal networking is often more efficient. Good contact to the editor of the local or national media or to opinion leaders of your target group pave the way for an unhampered flow of information.

*Personal,
Informal
Contacts*

Link: *Success Stories 3, 7*

14. Pick the Audience up Where It Is

Public opinion is most of all concerned by present cultural notions and own experiences. Arguing against this “knowledge” is without success. Involve the opinion of the public in your argumentation. Science topics in particular are too far from experiences of lay people. Try to explain your message with the help of examples from every day life. Use positive symbols, pictures and metaphors for simplification to gain acceptance.

*Pick up the
Audience
Where It Is*

Link: *Success Stories 4, 6*



List of PR Instruments

5

List of PR Instruments

The different public relations instruments described in the success stories are listed here divided by the area of communication they belong to.

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Methodology

6

Internal Communication

Jim Grob
Zoë Hoyle

What Do We Mean by Internal Communication?

Internal communication can be defined as the communication that goes on among and between the members of an organization – in this case, a forest science organization. While many of the same methods are used to communicate internally and externally, there are significant differences. Internal communication for a forest science organization is more concerned with building a cohesive mission among people who share a common knowledge base different from that of the general public.

Why Should We Promote Internal Communication?

- Gives people a sense of ownership in the organization;
- improves the work of the organization;
- keeps people informed;
- allows the organization to respond quickly to change and crisis;
- helps in problem-solving;
- builds respect and morale among the members of the organization;
- promotes fairness and equity.

Many forest science organizations are structured as a network of geographically separate units. Others may be housed in one location, but separated into functional groups. How well does information flow be-

tween unit researchers and administration, between researchers in one field and those in another? How well is the technical staff informed about the research direction of the organization? The problems forest science research involves can rarely be confined to one discipline or approach. The need to collaborate on research in almost all areas becomes more pressing as the global and multidisciplinary nature of major issues becomes more apparent.

At the organizational level, researchers often complain that the importance and significance of their work is not well understood within their own organization. Administrators and managers often complain that they are not as well-informed as they would like to be about the work being done by their researchers. Support staff may feel unappreciated or nonessential. Employees who do not communicate regularly with one another may lose the sense of how their work contributes to the purpose of the organization. It is essential that all the employees of a forest science organization understand that what they do is important to the overall purpose of the organization.

How Should Internal Communication Be Structured?

Definition of Identity

The first step in internal communication is to form a strategy that supports the vision of the organization and defines the goals of communication. These can be as simple as “maximizing science,” or “having all employees understand the purpose of the organization.” Internal communication can also be a powerful tool for promoting change within an organization; in this case, goals and messages must be clearly defined as well as ways of measuring success.

Interactive Communication

Methods of internal communication include: newsletters (electronic or printed), memos, guidelines, procedures, meetings, seminars, field tours, mentoring programs, trainings, supervision, and social situations. Some forest science organizations form cross disciplinary themes within the organization, bringing together researchers from multiple units. Peer reviews of journal articles, study plans, and other publications is another example of internal communication. It should be stressed that internal communication is not a one-way flow of information, but rather a continuing conversation between and among members of an organization. Internal communication provides a way to sense the climate within the organization, as well as a means for building consensus. For researchers, internal communication can be an avenue to let other people within the organization know about

their work so that its importance and relevance can be conveyed more clearly to the public.

Questions to Be Asked When Forming a Strategy for Internal Communication Include:

- What needs to be communicated?
- Who does it need to be communicated to?
- How should it be communicated?
- Who needs to communicate it?
- What is the intended result of the communication?

General types of information to be communicated include: job performance (expectations, directions); decision making (how decisions are made and how feedback and inputs are handled); future developments, and positive information about the organization and its work.

Examples of internal communications within a forest science organization include:

- Researcher communicates a field observation or a research need to an administrator.
- Administrators communicate with researchers about funding opportunities, trainings, seminars.
- Researcher communicates study plan to other researchers, practitioners, and administrators.
- Director communicates to all employees about changes in work process and policy changes, emergencies.
- Researcher informs communications office about research program.
- Communications office lets all employees know about awards won, goals achieved, major research breakthroughs.

- Organization hosts meetings for all scientists, cross-disciplinary seminars, trainings.
- Researchers from one unit host a field trip for researchers from other units.
- Employees across positions and units take a hike or rafting trip together.

How Do You Improve Internal Communication?

As is the case with external communication, improving internal communication depends on evaluating present efforts. This can be done with a survey or more informally, by asking for feedback or by making internal communication a topic at a meeting or training session. Calling a random sample of employees is another method. Focus groups are also a way to find out people's thoughts and opinions about the effectiveness of internal communication methods.

***Pick up the
Audience
Where It Is***

External Communication

Paul Baraza
Cindy L. Miner
Mangala de Zoysa

Introduction

Communication is a process of exchanging information based on shared meanings. External communication focuses on the exchange of information with people outside an organization. Types of external communication methods are described in this section including their key characteristics and some key considerations for the public affairs professional.

Some Dos and Don'ts of External Communication

- **Do** tie external communication to the mission of your organization. This provides direction for your effort and helps you describe the value of your efforts to the organization.
- **Do** develop strong internal communication with scientists and professionals who will provide the expertise and support you will need to be successful in your communication efforts.
- **Don't** be afraid to start somewhere even if it is a small effort – just be sure it carries the organization's purpose forward.
- **Don't** forget that a science organization's biggest asset is its credibility – make sure that your external communication effort only enhances the organization's scientific credibility.

Planning

Planning can assure that communication efforts are directed toward desirable, achievable, and measurable results.

1 Developing Goals and Objectives

Communication methods are effective means to ends that should be well defined by objectives. Goals are summary statements that describe overall outcomes of a communications program. Objectives represent the specific knowledge, opinion, and behavior outcome to be achieved for each defined audience. Key characteristics of objectives are: focus and direction for developing strategies and tactics, guidance and motivation for implementing a set of activities, and spell-out criteria for monitoring progress and assessing impact.

Definition of Identity

Key considerations include: communication strategies are part of the organizations overall mission and goals, the organization's leadership is included in the development of communication goals, and remember planning takes time upfront and saves even more time later.

2 Targeting Audiences

The audience for a communications effort needs to be described. A key characteristic of this description is how they are involved or affected by your organization. An overall effort may have several types of audiences, for example: forest managers, farmers, and members of communities. Methods are used to target specific audiences. For example consultations might be developed for managers, demonstrations for farmers, and a newsletter for members of the communities. Although these methods may overlap in audience, they would be primarily developed to reach a particular audience.

Identifying Target Groups

Key considerations include defining your audiences based on characteristics such as demographics, education, position as an opinion leader, memberships, and roles in decision processes and building an understanding of these audiences based on what the audience already knows about the information, how they feel about it, and what they currently do that is related to it.

3 Measurement and Evaluation

The measurable results of a communication program and its activities need to be documented so that impacts and progress can be tracked. Key characteristics of measurement and evaluation efforts include program design, monitoring implementation, and assessment of

impact and efficiency. The evaluation is for learning what happened and why. A variety of methods can be used including focus groups, content analyses, and surveys.

Key considerations include establishing the purpose of the evaluation, gaining organizational support for the effort, writing objectives in observable and measurable terms, selecting appropriate criteria, determining the most appropriate method, recording results, and use of findings to make improvements.

Types of External Communication

1 Direct

Direct communication is interpersonal. People exchange information directly with one another. Direct communication methods are very effective when the overall goal is related to influencing the use of new knowledge, information, or technologies. Information can be clarified and expanded in relation to the needs of the external audience. Some key methods follow:

1.1 Consultations

A consultation is when a small group convenes. The key characteristic of a consultation is lengthy discussion (2 or more hours). More than one session may be required to meet overall goals. Although these efforts can be intense and time-consuming and require a high level of skill in interpersonal communication, consultations can be very successful in meeting ambitious or complex communication goals.

For example, consultation with key groups of farmers may be very helpful in influencing the adoption of the tree planting techniques, particularly in conjunction with demonstrations. In another example, policymakers may meet with scientists for help in assessing the condition of forests across a large landscape. Information can be explained in great detail including the limits of scientific knowledge on topics.

Key considerations include: clearly identifying the goals of the consultation, the informational needs of participants, the most appropriate place to hold the consultation, the composition and size of the group, and the timing of consultation. Also consider using other communications methods before, during, and after the consultation to help support it.

**Produce
Events**

1.2 Demonstrations

Demonstration is a method that allow for show-and-tell. Key characteristics of demonstrations are activity, visuals, and discussions that are moderate in length (less than 2 hours). An audience has an opportunity to see and in some way experience for themselves how new information or technology can be used. Scientists and experts are available to show or explain concepts, practices, and technologies as well as answer questions from an audience.

Demonstrations allow for detailed tailoring to meet the expectations and needs of the audience, and as a result they can greatly vary in approach. Many forest-related topics can be communicated through field demonstration for audiences such as foresters or farmers. Sometimes demonstrations use play-acting, puppets, or other creative methods particularly when the audience is being introduced to a concept or practice so it can be placed in a familiar context and given meaning for the audience.

Key considerations include: identifying goals that lend themselves to demonstrations; understanding of the audience needs and expectations; logistics that might include travel to an area or equipment for technology; supporting materials that might include visuals such as maps, puppets, or pictures; and evaluation of the demonstration by participants.

1.3 Open Day

Open days are events held at a specific location, often an office or a particular site of activity. The audience is invited to attend the open day and learn about activities of an organization such as results of a set of research studies or ongoing research projects. Key characteristics are a series of short presentations (10 to 20 minutes) with time for questions and answers (5 to 10 minutes) and opportunity for lengthier discussions. Visuals should be part of the presentation whether presented as a poster, overhead, slides, or computer presentation. Demonstrations might also be incorporated into an open day.

Key considerations include invitations sent out well in advance of the day with reminders close to the event, coordination among presenters in their key messages and type of presentation, and logistics for various types of presentations.

1.4 Exhibits

Exhibits display information often with an expert available for clarification and explanation. Key characteristics are visuals and opportunity for

short discussions (less than 15 minutes). Exhibits usually are one part of a greater venue such as a conference, fair, or symposium. An exhibit is often in competition for the audience so the exhibit must not only share information but draw attention and appeal.

The exhibit needs to be carefully developed to meet the audience needs, which might include a wide range of needs for a single event. Thus the exhibit may need to address various skills and expectations. Demonstrations can be incorporated into exhibits. For instance, demonstration of computer applications can work well in conjunction with exhibits.

Key considerations include knowledge of the audience that will be attending the exhibit, visuals that convey information to the intended audience, and identification of key messages to address during short conversations with the audience.

2 Indirect

Indirect communication methods disseminate information through the written word. This type of communication has its greatest impact in creating awareness of new knowledge, information, or technologies. Indirect methods are most effective when used in conjunction with direct methods as part an overall communication strategy. This section focuses on publications. Other direct communication methods are described in the Internet and media sections. Steps shared in the following methods are: writing, editing, design, layout, proofreading, and printing.

2.1 Brochures

Brochures provide awareness of information. Key characteristics are short length and simple presentation. Formats can vary and include one-page or multiple-page fold-outs, and other configurations. Text is presented in clear language with photographs and figures that convey key information from the text. Often brochures are used for general audiences and stand alone.

*Provide
Confidence*

Key considerations include making sure the brochure fits with a larger communication strategy, design and copy fitting assures that sufficient white space is provided for easy reading, and graphics are of high quality.

2.2 Newsletters

The newsletter is a method to provide regular communication with an audience that has strong interest in the newsletter's subject. Key

characteristics include a set schedule for publication (monthly, annual, etc.) and a variety of features that stay consistent from issue to issue. Examples of features are main stories, a column with a message from the organizations leader, current events, and how-to tips. Occasionally a newsletter has very few features and focuses on a specific topic.

Key considerations include setting a schedule for regular production, a strategy for developing content, and development of a basic and consistent design.

2.3 Annual Reports

The annual report is an important method for an organization to inform its supporters and stakeholders of its accomplishments and current status. Key characteristics include an inviting design, concise information, and graphics to show trends. Annual reports vary by the organization's needs in content and length.

Key considerations include an understanding of what the organization's supporters or stakeholders need to know from the organization once a year, development of a mailing list, and reassessment of utility of report each year.

3 Items to Give Away

Important to an organization is recognition of its value to those it serves. Items that carry the organization's brand or logo help give the organization an identity. They can carry key messages for the organization and help spread good will. Key characteristics are quick visual impact and very simple messages. Examples of these items include pins, bumper stickers, calendars, paper weights, coffee cups, and pens.

Key considerations include making sure that the organization's symbol and name are included, that the item will be kept visible by the recipient (on their desk for example), and that the item serves its intended function well.

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Media Communication

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Introduction

1 Why Approach the Media?

A proactive approach to the media can help scientists inform different audiences about the results of research, help build networks with other forest science researchers, provide expert information to the public, gain support for funding, and influence policy makers.

2 What is News?

To target the media effectively, first determine whether your story is “news”, time-critical information appropriate for a wide audience. Your story may be more suited for a feature, if the information you offer is more detailed and without critical timing. Making this first decision will help you choose which medium to use to distribute your information.

*Media =
Gatekeeper*

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? The answers to these questions are the essential elements of a news story. Other factors to take into account when deciding whether your story is newsworthy include: the significance of the story in relation to other recent events; human interest; the “unusualness” of the story (when a dog bites a man, it is not news; but when a man bites a dog it is); local interest; and whether the information helps people solve problems.

Subjects for news stories include: original research findings presented at a conference or published in an upcoming journal or book; unique or unusual scientific projects; and expert commentary on a current event or problem.

3 What Gets Covered by the Media and Why?

Media = Gatekeeper

For non-media people it is difficult to find out what kind of a story gets covered and what does not. There are many circumstances that can influence whether this or that news or article will be picked up by the media. Some of the factors are well known (i.e., the quality of a story, its timeliness); some are not (i.e., the newspaper's daily strategy, the mood of an editor, competing stories). However, scientists, communicators and forest managers who deal with the media regularly should keep certain factors in mind when trying to increase coverage.

The story should provide new knowledge to the audience. Whether the story addresses a current public concern also influences whether it gets covered. The more a story can show how people benefit from science findings or what may happen if they choose to not be informed, the higher the chance of getting covered will be.

Window of Opportunity

Even if a story is newsworthy, the timing may be off. The media must balance their topics: they usually have limited space or time to report about science. A media outlet may not want to cover your science findings if a similar topic has been recently covered by a rival. Media work under keen competition: if you approach a contact with a story that has received recent coverage, be sure to offer a new angle.

Another reason your story might not be considered is the sheer wealth of competing stories. Media professionals choose only a few topics out of the hundreds of faxes and emails they get each day. News releases that refer to a certain date might be forgotten and thrown away forever; other less timely news might be skipped to a later date.

Personal, Informal Contacts

As important as the story is the relationships the communicator builds with media editors and writers. If media staff do not know your programs exist, they will not contact you for news, comments, or background information. People who want to tell stories on a continuing basis must work on building relationships with editorial staffs. Phone and e-mail media contacts regularly – but not too often. Keep them up-to-date about your area of research; invite them to discussions, talks or congresses; organize media events.

Ten Ways to Get Published

- 1** You should know the market for your product. Which newspaper, magazine, TV or radio station might be interested in your story? Which media reach your target audiences?
- 2** Contact the media regularly so they will listen to you when you have news to tell.
- 3** Apply for a one or two month practical course or internship at a science editor's office. You will gain an insight into how the staff works, and how decisions about news are made.
- 4** Follow media-specific guidelines on layout, title, lead, legend, length of articles, fees etc. precisely. Pay attention to the wording of the title, heading, lead, and legends. Use active wording, strong verbs, active voice when possible.
- 5** Find out when editorial meetings are held; remember not to call the editorial staff half an hour before and after the meeting, when their minds are occupied with other topics
- 6** If you have a "hot" topic, phone or e-mail the editorial staff and briefly tell them what is new about this topic, how relevant it is for their audience and, if you want to write the article yourself, how many words you intend to write. Do not send a manuscript without contacting the media; chances are good that nobody will take notice of it.
- 7** Even though the media have rejected your ideas or manuscripts, keep contacting them.
- 8** Look for special publication niches; look for new media formats to pitch your stories to.
- 9** Always reveal your information sources; editors must be able to re-examine them. Emphasize reliability; represent yourself or your institution as a serious partner.
- 10** Photography and art produced by your institution is another way to get coverage by print or Web-based media. When making photographs or art available, include a short explanatory text. Don't forget to include the names of the photographer or artist and your institution.

Ten Deadly Media Mistakes

- 1** *Lying.* This is the most grievous mistake you can make. A lie can shatter your reputation.
- 2** *Saying “no comment.”* Refusing to comment looks like you have something to hide. If there are legitimate reasons why you cannot comment, at least explain why.
- 3** *Being afraid to say “I do not know.”* Reporters do not expect you to know all the answers to their questions. You can always say: “I do not know, but I will see if I can get that information and call you back this afternoon.” Call back when you say you will.
- 4** *Not preparing for the interview.* Anticipate the most difficult questions the reporter could ask. Write down the answers, rehearse them, and keep them in front of you when talking.
- 5** *Talking “off the record.”* When talking to a reporter, assume everything you say can be used.
- 6** *Falling for the bluff.* A reporter hears a rumor, calls you and pretends to already know something. Before you talk, find out what the reporter really knows by asking questions such as: “Who told you that?” to help you determine if the reporter is bluffing.
- 7** *Responding immediately when you feel uncomfortable.* If you need time to collect your thoughts, say so. Try to find out what kinds of information the reporter wants and ask if you can call back in 15 minutes. Write down talking points before calling back.
- 8** *Loosing your cool.* Always maintain control and do not allow yourself to react in anger if a reporter asks what you think is an unfair question.
- 9** *Failing to correct errors.* Always let the media know when they have erred. If you do not, the error could be repeated over and over.
- 10** *Viewing the media as the enemy.* Do not set yourself up as an adversary. Despite the media claims of being “impartial,” they have friends as well as enemies. Become a friend.

Types of Media

The two main media types are print and broadcast. There are some obvious differences, but the two share certain constraints: absolute deadlines; an immediate need for details; severe time and space limitations; a distinction between news and features; and a structure of reporters, editors, managing editors, and producers.

1 Print

Daily newspaper: news can be filed by phone or email; can provide more extensive coverage; no requirement for visuals; facts and figures can be easily reproduced; frequent misquotes; editors alter stories.

Weekly newspaper (typically distributed on Sunday): between daily newspaper and magazine; focus is still on news; more “people” oriented than daily newspaper; good for science topics: some have science pages and space for longer stories.

Community newspaper: less rigorous about news; linked directly to community issues; most “people” oriented; less staff, so more responsive to prepared copy; geographically limited.

Magazine: long deadlines, longer story possibilities; some are national, some local; many directed at special audiences. Science magazines include “New Scientist” and “Discover”.

Trade and professional publication: line between editorial and advertising is less clear; targeted to niche markets; opportunity for more detail and complexity. Publications in the science and technology trade are directed primarily towards scientists, engineers, or other professional groups.

2 Broadcast

Television: broadest audience, visual exposure, better product recognition; quoted directly, less margin of error; need either good visuals or emotional story; demands a more practiced response; interviews have high impact but increased risk.

Radio: provides more detail; exerts more control over topic and content; more interactive with audience; immediate response.

In addition to news, TV and radio produce special programs and documentaries. Laboratory and field work are attractive settings for producers. Local radio and TV talk shows are always looking for guests with interesting stories. Be cautious when talking to broadcasters about unpublished research that has not been peer-reviewed.

3 New Media

The Internet is arguably the most powerful new tool for communicating science, and is capable of incorporating text, sound, images, animation, and video into interactive modules. More about using the Internet is available in the chapter “Internet Communication”. In addition, new digital technologies promise to blur the boundaries between television and the Internet and to bring new potentials and challenges to communicating about science. Satellite radio will also bring hundreds of new channels into cars and homes across the world in the next few years.

How Media Works

Science communicators need to understand the media types they choose to reach their target audiences. In most media offices, science news is sent to a science department, which usually does not work under the same time pressure associated with local, breaking news. Most of the media follow a number of general rules.

Editorial staff are always in a hurry. Every day they produce a new edition, make a short video, or write an article. The first rule of the game is timeliness. With new media types cropping up daily, it becomes more important to be the first to report something. Science communicators need to learn to deal with the time pressures the media operate under, but must also be vigilant about maintaining the accuracy of information conveyed to the public. One way to do this is to ask the journalist to send a draft of the article for review. Some media never allow this: others welcome the chance to have the “science” checked for accuracy.

Media Outreach: A Communications Toolkit

1 The Press Release

One of the most critical communications tools is the press release. The press release answers the basic journalistic questions of who,

what, why, when, and where. Seven basic elements provide its structure:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: These words should appear in the upper left-hand margin, just under your letterhead. You should capitalize every letter.

Contact Information: Skip a line or two after release statement and list the name, title, phone and fax numbers of your spokesperson (the person with the most information). It is important to give your home number since reporters may need a contact after work hours.

Headline: Skip two lines after your contact information and use a boldface type.

Dateline: This should be the city your press release is issued from and the date you are sending your release.

Lead Paragraph: The first paragraph needs to grab the reader's attention and should include information relevant to your message such as the five Ws (who, what, when, where, why).

Text: The main body of your press release where your message should fully develop.

Recap: At the lower left hand corner of your last page restate your product's specifications, highlight a product release date or restate a research finding.

2 Collateral Material

Collateral material is anything that supports your announcement, such as simplified white papers summarizing your research or even the scientific articles referred to in the release.

3 Third-party Endorsements

When you are on the leading edge of research, the proof of concept or peer review process may not necessarily be timed with your announcement; however, a little advance planning can help. Share your research with other scientists or researchers and ask them to endorse your work. Having the data come from these third parties adds credibility to your story. If your third parties agree to support your work, provide them with two or three talking points; these should be very crisp and clear.

**Produce
Events**

4 Media Events

Think about ways to attract writers with special events. If your announcement is about research in the woods, invite the press to join you. Reporters will instinctively know to bring a photographer along. Press photography means more prominent story placement.

5 Press Conferences

Reporters hate press conferences because their competitors are in the room with them. Though more time consuming, one-on-one meetings with key writers and editors are more productive in getting a story told.

6 Artwork

Artwork should tell a story or explain a complex process and should be capable of standing alone. Some examples of artwork are included.

7 Photography

Like artwork, photography must tell a story. Most major newspapers will not accept photographs taken by someone other than their own photographers. Others appreciate original photos from science because they are unique; medium to smaller newspapers will more often accept them.

8 Cover Video (B-Roll)

If you involve television, producing cover footage for reporters to use in their stories is very important. If your subject is difficult to shoot, hire a local video production company to do the work for you. Make sure the video format is correct for the markets you target.

9 Wire Services

There are two forms of wire distribution, fee and free ... Services such as Eurekalert, Business Wire, PR Newswire, M2 Press Wire or Nordic Business News (NBN) charge to run your press release. Go to their respective web sites to check for rates and distribution lists.

Free wire services include the Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), Reuters, Bloomberg, Canadian Press (CP), Agence France-Presse. These services are subscribed to by news organizations, so the focus is on “news.” Sending your press release to these services does not guarantee they will run it.

Strategic Planning

Dealing with the media requires thought and planning. If your organization has a press officer, contact that individual early in the process to help plan for your desired outcome with the media.

1 Developing Objectives and Desired Results

What is the end result you want to achieve with your outreach to the media? The media will not run a commercial for your work, so you need to think carefully of your approach. For example, it may be premature to invite the BBC over to chat with you, when it might be more relevant to have a writer from New Scientist talk to you about your work. Set some specific objectives with desired results, and work with your press officer to refine these elements.

2 Key Messages

Never offer more than three key messages. If you go beyond three, you may create an information overload situation. Keep your messages short and simple.

3 Targeting Audiences

Think about the audience you want to reach. Is it the general public? Industry? Fellow scientists? Identify and segment who you want to reach and why.

4 Measurement and Evaluation

You need specific measuring and evaluation tools to determine whether you met your objective and reached your targeted audience. How do you measure your results? From press clippings? From new relationships with other researchers?

5 Conclusion

As stated earlier, the number of media outlets is increasing, all competing for the attention of publics with severe information overload. At the same time, reporters and editors have less time to spend on stories; there are actually fewer outlets for the in-depth, detailed stories required to explain the complex, long-term research that makes up forest science. It is increasingly important that scientists and science communicators understand media and learn to get their findings out in plain, compelling language.

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Internet Communication

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Overview

Internet is a world wide network of computers connected through public and private telecommunications networks with the objective of exchanging information. The most commonly known and most used part is the **World Wide Web** (WWW). To access this World Wide Web people need a browser (examples: MS Explorer, Netscape Navigator) and a connection to the Internet.

Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are companies that provide individuals or organizations access to the Internet.

Other parts of the Internet include Electronic Mail, File Transfer (moving files from one computer to another), Newsgroups (Internet bulletin boards), streaming video, live video conferencing, and Chat (live conversations between two or more people).

Opportunities and Threats

Clearly, the Internet has changed numerous industries in recent years, from retailing to real-time communications. Perhaps no industry has been changed so profoundly, however, as the news media and by extension, its tenuous ally – the public relations industry.

The news delivery process has become a dizzying, non-stop stream of news played out on web sites, chat boards, and online conferences. The transformation has created both opportunity and challenges for the public relations industry.

The Internet, with e-mail, online information, e-conference, and video-conference created an array of opportunities for public relations. On the other hand it becomes more and more difficult to manage the information flows and to attract the attention to your

piece of information. A specific remark is the fact that Internet is a medium tool widely accessible in the western parts of the World (North America, Western Europe, Australia, and Japan) but limited in other parts of the world (Africa).

Almost any public relations vehicle – from newsletters to videotapes to press releases – can be adapted to the Internet for increased exposure at minimal additional costs for development and miniscule cost for delivery. In science communications, where information is THE product, the Internet has a special place. At a minimum, science organizations can post their full text publications, decision tools, and data sets online. In the United States and other countries, publications that were written by government employees are in the public domain, and not subject to copyright assignment to journals or book publishers – allowing Federal webmasters to post their scientists' papers, regardless of whether they were originally published in-house.

Another unique advantage of the Internet over other science delivery tools is that the organization can control releases of time-sensitive information – such as assessments, major breakthroughs, and controversial findings – giving reporters equal and simultaneous access to the information.

A third feature of the Internet that is extremely useful to scientists is in providing opportunities to upload and download data and images for collaboration on manuscripts and other research products. Through File Transfer Protocol (FTP), authors can easily upload and download data, maps, PDFs, and other oversized files in an environment that is password protected. No more CD in the mail or e-mails that are returned as undeliverable!

A common threat is the focus on the tools instead of the audiences. One example is a director or board saying it is important to have a web site, while your target audience does not have computers, Internet access, or even electricity. As with every communication strategy, you should first consider your target group and the message you want to display.

The strength of Internet tools are: relatively low user costs, and a potential user group of millions.

The weaknesses of Internet tools are: high investment costs (computers, Internet connection) and a wide array of different user groups (kids, students, professionals).

E-Mail

There are many free providers for e-mail (common examples are Yahoo and Hotmail) with all different conditions. Without getting into technical details two different e-mail systems can be defined: Web-based mail (such as offered by Yahoo and Hotmail), where you use the WWW to access your e-mails and send others (you have to be online); and server based mail, where you use a specific software program (like MS Outlook) to call to a computer server and retrieve or send your mail (you only need to be online while making this connection, but can write and read messages offline).

E-mail is widely used as a public relations tool. The medium is rather informal (less formal than a letter, more formal than a telephone call), direct (directed to a person), accurate and fast (can reach Amsterdam and Melbourne at virtually the same time) and dependable (almost every e-mail sent is certain to be delivered). At the same time SPAM hampers smooth e-mail communication. SPAM messages are unwanted mail, and almost always offer to sell something (from computer software to sex to magazine subscriptions to cheap vitamins to pyramid schemes).

To ensure that people will not automatically delete your public relations message as SPAM, always indicate the contents of your e-mail clearly in **subject heading**. Consider and define the attachment format. Dispatch extensive attachments only if you can be sure that it will be desired and readable by the receiver.

Tip: If you wish to send e-mail as a public relations tool, first access your audience to see if e-mail is widely used or accessible. Also check if people are interested in receiving your information. Unwanted mail, SPAM, is annoying and harms your image.

Listservers, or electronic mailing lists, are programs to redistribute mail messages to groups of (interested) e-mail users. Users can subscribe and unsubscribe by sending e-mail to the mailing list or by using online forms. These programs are highly effective ways to share information with people who have expressed interest in your company or service.

- Forest List: <http://listserv.funet.fi/archives/forest.html>

WWW or World Wide Web

There are over 272 million web sites offering information on subjects ranging from molecular sciences to astronomy and, of course, forest issues. As a source of information the WWW is often regarded as the world biggest library. But how to find this information between 272 million addresses. Luckily there are special devices called search engines helping you to browse through the vast extent of Web pages.

- ▶ Search engines: www.google.com;
www.yahoo.com;
www.altavista.com;
www.lycos.com

There are also web sites of various organizations offering forest related overviews of useful information on various topics.

Adding another Web page to existing 272 million may seem pointless, but without a Web page you will know for sure that no one will be able to retrieve your information through the Internet.

Step 1

Building a website is not a major effort, but maintenance is. A web site that is loaded with outdated information will only annoy people. So before building, think of a good structure (such as required time and staffing) to regularly update the Web page.

Step 2

The second step is to carefully consider the structure of the web site. What information should be available on all of the pages on your web site and what internal mechanisms will govern access to this information? Some essential elements are:

- Mission or objective of the organization,
- (current) activities (projects),
- upcoming activities of specific interest to the audience (meetings),
- outputs (such as publications and trainings) *and*
- contact address for more information.

Consider what you want to know about any other organization. This is what other people want to know about your organization. Also, if you want to provide information in additional languages, it is important to make that decision at the onset.

Step 3

The third step is the creation itself, consisting of design and programming. The design is of major importance and should fit the corporate image (no flashing banners for a respectable law firm) and be readable. The main message: Don't overdo it.

HTML (Hypertext Markup language) is commonly used for styling Web pages and plenty of web sites offer tutorials and free add-ins. Other frequently used computer languages include PHP, Java and Javascript. These languages consist of a set of lines of computer code that together perform a specific action. Such a set is called a script. Simple scripts provide information such as the local time and the number of visitors; more complicated ones provide the opportunity to query databases, order something, and to pose questions. Many scripts are available online for free to use in your own Web page. These languages provide the opportunity to be interactive and to respond on actions of your visitors.

- Basics, definitions, standards: <http://www.w3o.org>

Step 4

The next part is equally important, writing the content itself. Writing for the Internet is different than writing an article for a magazine, newspaper or journal. You should be aware of the limitations (reading something on a computer monitor is more likely to cause eye strain than reading a magazine so articles should be broken into shorter paragraphs and sentences). Also one should use the specific Internet opportunities like linking (connecting to another Web page through a click with the mouse on a word or button).

Tips for Internet writing are widely available and taking a look at various sites of colleague organizations is also very helpful.

- <http://www.internetprguide.com/>

Indispensable writing resources:

<http://www.quintcareers.com/writing/index.html>

Internet writing journal:

<http://www.writerswrite.com/journal/>

Step 5

With a complete Web page on the computer the information is not yet available to the public. Therefore the files have to be made accessible through a server, a computer connected to the WWW. A server is quite expensive to buy and maintain and only the larger organizations can afford such a server computer. Smaller organizations use a commercial server, which are widely available worldwide. Just check with your local chambers of commerce or online for a list of available Internet providers and check for their hosting-tariffs. You normally pay for the amount of information you want to store on the server (10 MB is enough for a starting Web page) and the amount of traffic (users accessing your web site and using the information on the server, 200-500 MB for a starting web site). You also pay for the registration of a specific address (the name of the web site like www.hotmail.com). The provider has various tariffs for national registration (e.g. **.nl** for Netherlands, **.ke** for Kenya, **.sl** for Sri Lanka) and international registration (**.org** for organization; **.com** for commercial; **.int** for international NGO).

Once the contract with the provider is signed you will get technical details on how to connect with the server and how to place your information online for public access. There are also free providers who provide a modest Web page (5 to 10 MB) to store on their server.

- ▶ Free providers: Overview at <http://www.100best-free-web-space.com/>

Other Internet Tools

Chat, videoconferencing, I-mode (Internet on mobile phones) are other Internet tools that could be used for public relations in forest science. Chat and videoconferencing especially are used as a (cheap) alternative for meetings because participants are able to directly respond to each other and even see the other. However, many users argue that current technology is still facing limitations (such as delay in transmission or disturbances through bad connections). More important is that distant meetings are never the same as direct meetings where people sense the atmosphere and see much more non-verbal communication. Face-to-face contact is still regarded one of the most powerful communication tools. However, if a direct meeting is not possible, Chat or Videoconferencing might be a suitable alternative.

New developments like I-mode and UMTS (wireless Internet) are entering the market fast. It is important to keep informed on new developments and the opportunities they offer for public relations in forest science. However, use common sense to refrain from hypes that cost a lot of your time/money and might not provide the turn off you expected.

Measurements and Evaluation

As with every communication tool it is important to consider the effectiveness of the Internet in getting the information to the targeted audience. As it impossible to have a questionnaire among all Internet users there are a few devices to be used for evaluation purposes:

Traffic Statistics – Any company that hosts your web site should provide you with statistical reports on the traffic or visitors to your site. Information from these reports can identify your most popular pages, time of day when you get the most visits, and to a lesser extent, where people are coming from (examples, universities, governments, home computer, and foreign countries.)

Customer Forms – You can add a questionnaire to your Web page and ask visitors to give information regarding the service you provide, how you can improve your web site, ask questions and request additional information.

The feedback will provide the opportunity to fine tune your Internet tools to the various users and improve your communication in forest science.

Lesson Learned

With the immense power of the Internet comes an equally heavy responsibility for credibility and customer service. On pages 66 and 67 are some DOs and DON'Ts that will help webmasters, contents managers and contributing scientists:

DO

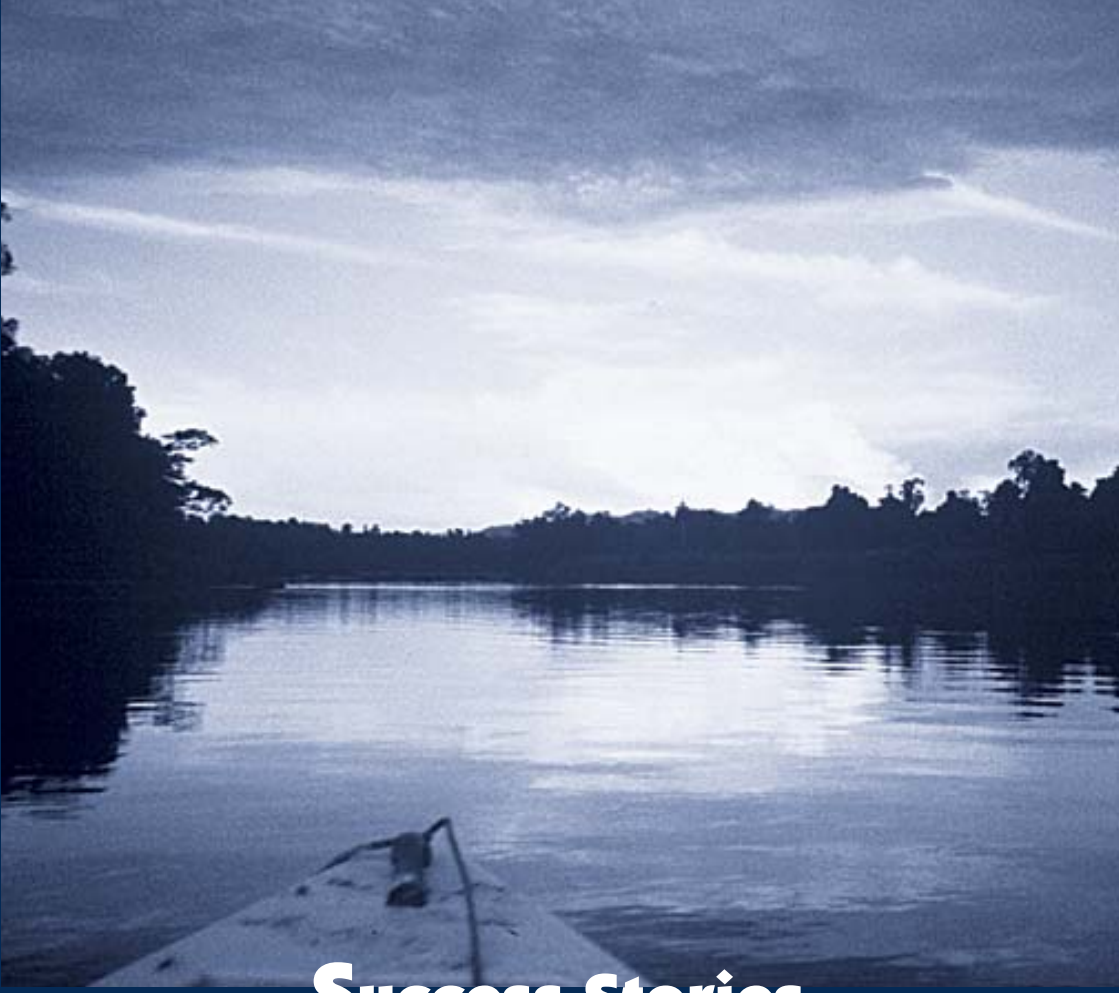
- As much as possible, make your web site a two-way communication providing e-mail addresses for contact and further dialog with scientists and a feedback mechanism to query for design preferences, desired features, and general satisfaction.
- Trade links with your partners. Remember that most search engines give higher visibility to web sites that are well connected.
- Let your visitors know what level of credibility to expect from the information on your web site. Is everything peer reviewed? Is “gray literature” clearly identified? What are the credentials of your scientists?
- Use list servers to notify visitors of important new contents on your web site, but never add a name to your list without permission.
- Remember that your visitors scan web sites from right to left and from top to bottom. Put your most important content in the upper left corner of your web site.
- Keep it simple! Don’t forget that different browsers and different monitors display graphics and color differently. What looks beautiful on your computer may be unreadable to others.



DON'T

- Don't embark on a web site unless you have the resources to maintain it and keep it fresh with new contents. Your organization's reputation will suffer if your web site regularly sits neglected for more than a month at a time.
- Don't forget that different browsers and different monitors display graphics and color differently. What looks beautiful on your computer may be unreadable to others. Keep it simple!
- Don't reinvent the wheel. Before launching on a new database or other labor-intensive application, explore opportunities to add to what already exists or collaborate with others who have similar goals and needs.
- Don't neglect the visually impaired when adding color or content. Remember that some people cannot distinguish between red and green. It is relatively easy and inexpensive to offer versions of your documents that can be recognized by screen readers.
- Don't introduce animation for its own sake. Dancing girls tripping across the screen may amuse some of your visitors, but will certainly offend others. Animation is best when used to demonstrate in a learning situation.
- Don't be afraid to load your web site with contents, as long as it is well organized and easy to access and navigate. Research shows that visitors seek text and graphics more often than photographs.





Success Stories

7

Public Relations at the European Forest Institute

Anu Ruusila

Period of Time: 1994 –

Problem: EFI is a new association and needs to increase the number of its members; decision makers don't know about the usefulness of EFI as a non-biased source of scientific information.

PR Instruments Used: Newsletter; press campaign; logo

Causes of Success: Clear definition of the image; identification of target groups; cooperation with PR professionals outside EFI, taking account of media rules like timing and newsworthy messages. ◀

Starting Point

The European Forest Institute was established in 1993. As a new forest research institute with a pan-European focus, its research programmes were just being developed and first research projects started. Before the research was going to yield results and news were going to be distributed, the Institute itself had to be made known. As the first impression counts most, the image conveyed had to be 'spot-on'.

The Institute is an association with organisational membership. EFI had twelve founding members but the number of members needed to be increased in order to reach an as wide and comprehensive forest research network in Europe as possible. Scientific results do not tend to reach decision makers and it was therefore of utmost importance to assure them of the usefulness of EFI as a non-biased source of scientific information provided in a user-friendly form.

In order to grow and be acknowledged in the international research arena, EFI had to find the suitable PR tools to be used and

Communication Strategy

developed for its specific needs. The Board of EFI acknowledged this fact and prepared a communication strategy for the Institute in 1994. At that time, the planned PR measures included the EFI Newsletter, press campaigns, networking and even a video of the Institute. Internet was not listed as such – the technological advances in that field were difficult to fathom at that stage. The PR measures have changed somewhat since, some have stayed and some were never realised. The following describes **some** of these PR tools and actions in more detail.

Tools of the Trade

Definition of Identity

The image of the Institute was going to be built as new, reliable and attractive. To start with there was only an empty table – no previous PR material or guidelines. Only a vision and the fact existed that EFI was filling a gap in the European forest research scene. Hence the image had to reflect the dynamism and uniqueness of the Institute. A **logo**, which would be memorable and functional and embedding EFI's character had to be developed and selected in the very beginning. A talented designer behind the visual image of the Ministerial Conference for Protecting Forests in Europe, Mr. Antti Porkka, was recruited for this purpose. The logo of an oak leaf integrated with a pine needle was selected due to its simplicity (it could be used almost in any type of product/printed matter), uniqueness and visuality. The oak and the pine also symbolise the variety of European forests from broadleaf to conifer.

Expert Knowledge

The **general PR work** at EFI has been acknowledged as a significant measure from the beginning. The work has consisted, among others, of regular contacts to international and national media, of producing PR material which is both credible and visually of high quality, as well as of creating databanks and of organising scientific events. These measures have supported other PR work such as personal contacts with EFI's members, forestry professionals and decision makers.

Press releases and **contacts with the media** were found to be effective, both locally and nationally. Once the EFI network grew, it was also a useful way in breaking news elsewhere in Europe. News do not strike the readers in the same way as marketing (advertising), they are seen as reliable sources of information by

most people. In comparison with the costs of producing marketing material, press campaigns are a cost-effective method to reach wide audiences. However, it must be kept in mind that attracting the interest of a press agency and journalists requires a press release that stands out.

An example of a successful EFI **press campaign** is the one following the finalisation of the Forest Map of Europe in December 2002. A research team had been working on the map for two years and the final product of the project was going to be a printed map. It was agreed to run a press campaign on it in order to inform the potential users of the map and also to market it. The details of the campaign are described in below.

One of the specific PR tools that have been decided upon in the early days was the EFI News newsletter. It was important to keep EFI visible and the newsletter seemed to be the most effective way to reach all kinds of audiences, from researchers to policy makers. At first the newsletter was four pages long but it soon grew to 8 pages, being now 20 pages long. The careful planning of the visual image of the newsletter, combined with short, well-edited articles made EFI News stand out with its reader-friendliness and dynamism. The format has proven successful as will be discussed later on.

How to Get There?

The following reconstructs the processes involved in the above mentioned PR measures.

The design project of the EFI logo started in 1992 and lasted until 1993. First we had to decide on the designer. Once Antti Porkka was selected, the Acting Director communicated him on the wishes of the Institute. The design was reviewed twice: first within the Institute and second at the Interim Board Meeting. The Interim Board reviewed some of the options given by the designer and provided him with feedback in the form of suggestions. Once the logo was agreed upon, the designer made the design of the basic printed materials for EFI (letter paper, business cards, etc.). The cost of the design was lower than usual because Mr Porkka designed the EFI logo and the Institute's graphical & visual image as his Master of Arts final thesis for

the Helsinki School of Arts. At this stage the visual image of EFI was fixed: the letter type 'palatino' was decided upon by Mr Porkka. He designed the rest of the printed materials accordingly. The cost was approximately 8,600 USD, which can be considered a modest sum.

The general PR work at EFI has consisted of various measures such as press and media contacts, information materials, personal contacts and development of databanks. In the following the procedure of press releases is described.

Press releases and campaigns are either planned a long time in advance or on short notice. Usually it is known when there will be research results etc. for publicising. Sometimes, the news may be more sudden. The office of external relations takes care of the implementation of the whole campaign. The scientist in question drafts the press release after which the External Relations Manager may edit it, or the other way round, the External Relations Manager drafts the release and the scientist in question edits or comments the draft. A scientifically accurate and reader-friendly press release requires both parties. The time period for preparing a release is short since the press release can be written and finalised within a day. It is a policy at EFI that press releases should not be longer than one page, which occasionally may cause problems in editing the piece of news. Once the release is ready, the most suitable day and target group(s) for sending it out is decided upon. The office of external relations maintains lists of media contacts, and press releases are usually sent out by email and put on the EFI homepage. Pictures or other visual material are included in the press releases as often as possible. Press releases are a cost effective means to publish research results, news and other achievements. They require staff time but no extra costs.

In the case of the European Forest Map launched at the end of 2002, the piece of news was anticipated well in advance. Once the main funding source, the Joint Research Centre, had given its permission for publicising the project result, the press release was sent out. The press release was selected as one of the PR measures in this case due to its cost-efficiency and ability to reach audiences outside forest research. The researchers were reached with articles in scientific publications, EFI News, presentations and posters at scientific conferences and EFI homepage.

EFI News is a newsletter and its themes are selected on a case by case basis from one year to 6 months in advance by an editorial team. Once the theme has been decided upon, the Managing Editor drafts an outline of the issue and sends it to the editorial team for their comments. After the rough outline and the theme have been decided, the Managing Editor of the EFI News approaches EFI Board, Scientific Advisory Board, EFI's Regional project Centres and researchers approximately 3 months before publishing the newsletter and asks them for their possible contributions and suggestions. Occasionally, other authors (leading policy-makers, conference speakers) may be invited to contribute. Once the material has been sent to the Managing Editor, she makes a more detailed outline of the contents and sends it to the editorial team for comments/acceptance. This is followed by the editing of the articles, whenever needed. Sometimes, the editing work may be quite extensive. Other news material, such as short project news, event announcements and member news are submitted by various sections of the Institute. The editor compiles the newsletter and works closely with the designer at the final stages (layout, selecting pictures and photographs, finalising text) of publishing it. In 2002 the number of copies printed was 6000 per issue and the cost of layout and printing of one number was app. 8000 euro per issue. The editor allocates three weeks of her time to each issue. Once the issue is published, it is sent to 5000 readers worldwide, mostly in Europe.

The Effects

Altogether, the logo of EFI has been well received. Its success resides in its simple but effective design, which does appreciate also the practical requirements for the use of the logo. The logo has been in use for nearly ten years and there is no need for improvement or change. The choice was successful and cost-effective.

General PR of EFI has been relatively successful, with some special highlights and quieter periods. On the basis of comments received, the promotional material has reached a wide audience. In the case of press releases, some have made it to various newspapers, magazines etc. while some have not. We

intend to send press releases regularly – every press release cannot always make it to the news, but the journalists are thus reminded about EFI's work each time they receive a press release.

In the case of the European Forest Map, the press release was sent to EFI Members (141 organisations mainly in Europe), forest media in Europe (77 forest related journalists or media), general media in Europe (23 national newspapers) and Finnish media (51 forest journalists, national newspapers, TV, radio). The result of the campaign was very good: one long story in the main national evening news (Finland), articles in at least 5 Finnish newspapers, 8 articles in other international forestry magazines/journals that we know of (at least German, Austrian, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Canadian). The web site has been frequently visited. The story reached also the major national newspaper "Die Zeit" and the economic magazine "Die Deutsche Wirtschaft" in Germany.

The success of the EFI News is difficult to express in figures but it can certainly be said that it has been a flagship of EFI PR for nine years now. People wish to receive it and often contact EFI to get further information on a particular topic, which proves that the articles are carefully read. In 1996, a reader survey was made and the feedback was positive. The newsletter is also popular in the sense that many scientists wish to submit articles to it as they know that the newsletter reaches a wide and heterogeneous audience.

Conclusion

The whole PR of EFI has been created within EFI basically from scratch. This has had its pluses and minuses: on one hand the PR did not have any strains or limitations from traditions within the organisation, and on the other hand everything that has been done has been a new venture and a learning process. This has had a positive effect on those working on PR with the feeling of pioneering something and succeeding in it.

The people working on PR have learnt a great deal along the way and the smooth cooperation with PR professionals outside EFI has been vital in order to succeed in the PR efforts. Long-standing cooperation with an advertising agency with special knowledge in forestry has been a special advantage.

This article highlighted the EFI logo, some measures in general PR and EFI News as success stories in EFI's PR work. Many other measures have existed and still exist. The most significant PR measures have remained and have found their place in EFI's promotional work leaving less promising measures behind. Needless to say that there have also been lessons learned!

One of EFI's characteristics lay in its network. EFI is first and foremost a networking organisation and PR work for it is continuously done by its members, Board members, Scientific Advisory Board members, Regional Project Centres and other close collaborators. PR measures are designed to take this characteristic into account.

Finally, it can be said that EFI's PR work as a whole has been a success especially when the special circumstances surrounding it are taken into account. A lot of work needs still to be done and new measures need to be thought of. And what is behind successful PR? Good and reliable research, of course.

www.wald-zentrum.de

An Internet Presentation in Forestry Science PR

**Jutta Krull
Dorothe Tesch**

Period of Time: 12/2003 – 4/2004 (open end)

Problem: A widely diverse number of dialogue groups

PR Instruments Used: Web page; press release

Causes of Success: Linking-up of different PR activities; media communication with homepage; help of a professional agency; development of a corporate design; clear identification of target groups; clear and simple messages. ◀

Introduction

In view of the enormous ecological, economic and socio-cultural significance that the forest in North Rhine-Westphalia has for this densely populated German state (population of 18 million), the state government and the University of Münster established the “Centre for Forest Ecosystems” in October 2003. This form of institution is unique in Germany and combines the following two bodies “under a single roof”:

- The Research Group for Forest Ecology, Forestry and Timber Utilization at the Institute for Landscape Ecology at the University of Münster;
- and*
- The International Institute for Forest Ecosystem Management and Timber Utilization North Rhine-Westphalia at the University of Münster.

The primary task of the Research Group for Forest Ecology, Forestry and Timber Utilization is to familiarize the students of landscape ecology, geography and geo-informatics courses at the University of Münster with forest ecosystem management and the concept of multiple-use forestry. The training involves both lectures in basic topics such as forest ecology, forest management and wood industry as well as practical exposure to allow students to apply their knowledge under real-world working conditions. This interdisciplinary approach is designed to instill a reciprocal sense of understanding for the different demands towards the forests, by both nature conservationists and the forestry industry.

**Definition
of Identity**

The International Institute for Forest Ecosystem Management and Timber Utilization North Rhine-Westphalia considers itself as a link between science and practical application. It covers the fields of regional and international applied research including consulting and further education in all fields related to the forest and the wood processing industry.

When the Centre for Forest Ecosystems became operational in January 2004, several PR activities were launched in order to make this innovative institution known to the public. The implementation of PR activities first concentrated on Germany and then expanded to the international level. These activities were also designed to support the building of a positive image and to help establish the Centre for Forest Ecosystems as a competent research and advisory facility in the field of the forest, forestry and the wood industry.

**Identifying
Target
Groups**

The dialogue groups targeted by the different PR instruments and measures are extremely diverse: they range from forestry professionals including forest officers, forest owners, members of forestry faculties, students at the University of Münster and other colleges and universities to the various interested individuals of the general public. As the Centre for Forest Ecosystems is active internationally, these interest groups are not confined to Europe but can also be found in many different geographical and cultural regions throughout the world. This diversity of dialogue groups makes successful PR activities at the Centre for Forest Ecosystems a real challenge, because we have to ask the question: How can we make sure that our communication messages reach all of these dialogue groups?

PR Instruments Applied

The Centre for Forest Ecosystems employs different PR instruments with emphasis on press and media work, which has played a key role in the still relatively young history of the institute. In future, however, event communication, communication with the print media, visual media and other PR instruments will become increasingly important. For targeting the diverse array of dialogue groups in different locations around the world communication work using the Internet is enormously important. After all, we can no longer imagine living without the "Web". According to a study conducted by the market specialists at "Nielsen/NetRatings", by the end of 2002 the international Internet community totalled some 580 million people aged 16 and over. If we take a look at the current figures for Germany, this relevance becomes even more striking: "Wahlen Online" claims that in the first quarter of 2004 approximately 57 per cent of all Germans aged 18 and over had access to the Internet. The Internet can be used to communicate news to a very wide audience at any time and anywhere. Therefore, the decision was made to simultaneously develop a homepage and a corporate design for the Centre for Forest Ecosystems. The homepage serves, in the first place, to portray the institute and raise its profile and, secondly, to communicate important research findings and results of project activities to national and international audiences.

Process of Implementing PR Instruments

The homepage project team consists of two employees, who work in close cooperation with the head of the Centre for Forest Ecosystems. In addition, all the employees participated in the initial brainstorming and decision-making process. They continue to receive regular updates on the progress of the project.

A professional PR agency was contracted to implement the homepage project, particularly in terms of technology and design. The search for an adequate service provider concentrated on companies that were capable of mastering both a good Web publication product and a complete corporate design. Direct exchange between the customer and the service

**Expert
Knowledge**

provider is also a key requirement for a smooth implementation of the project. That is why it was also important for the external service provider to be located in the immediate proximity of the institute. Experience in working for a natural science institution was considered an additional asset. Face-to-face meetings were arranged to review the offers and allow the agencies to present their plans for creating the corporate design and the homepage. After awarding the contract the successful company first started with the corporate design component. The basic framework for the in-house design was completed by the end of January 2004. This paved the way for starting to work on the homepage by first addressing the following strategic issues:

- What do we want to communicate on the web site?
- Who are the target groups?
- What are the target group's capabilities (technical skills)?
- What do the target groups want (opportunities)?

**Provide
Confidence**

It was also necessary to select the most suitable type of web site. Basically, there are three types to choose from: an information site, a lexical database site (e.g. www.whatis.com) and an interactive trading site (e.g. www.ebay.de, www.amazon.com). In a consulting session with the agency, it quickly became clear that an information site would be the only viable option to reach such a heterogeneous target group. This type of site consists primarily of text information, although it is also important to make sure that the users do not find themselves confronted with an excessive number of text pages. It is particularly important to make a clear design of a homepage. One principle rule says that the user should be able to find the contact person, the exact address and the telephone number of the company "by the third click at the latest".

Another step in the web site preparation was the development of a clear, easy-to-use navigation concept that makes it possible even for inexperienced users to easily use the site. Consequently, it was decided to focus on ten main navigation menu items that deal primarily with the institute, the employees as well as research and education. One important menu item is devoted primarily to the media; this is where media personnel will find all of

the press releases issued by the Centre, including image material and the main press articles. In order to make the information easily accessible for the dialogue groups of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, the decision was made to maintain the web site in German, English, French and Spanish. Frames were used for the technical implementation of the navigation; they divide the pages into individual fields, thus creating a fixed framework to facilitate orientation.

Once the corporate design had been determined and the basic issues outlined above clarified, the software developers were able to start their work at the beginning of February 2004. Texts and image material was supplied by the client. Important for the texts: they should be clear and simple in structure, geared to the target group and communicate interesting information. For graphics and pictures the basic rule of "less is more" applies. But a page with out any image material at all looks very plain and boring. It is also important to note the time it takes for the images to load. On the Internet, it is most common to use low-resolution images in compressed jpg format, so that loading a page will not take too long.

The next step was to register the domain name(s). There is no problem in registering several domain names and have them all

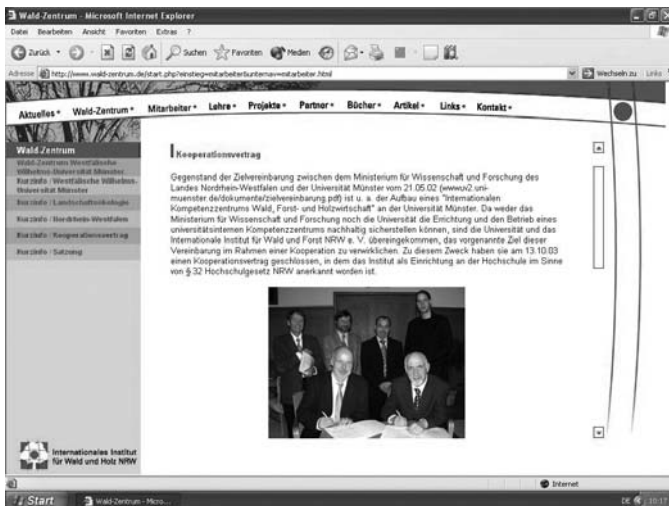
Fig. 1: www.wald-zentrum.de: Entry Page



directed to the same address. DENIC eG is the central registration office for all domains beneath the top-level domain **.de**. This is where you can find out whether or not a specific domain name is already registered and to whom it has been registered. Entering all the data was done in close cooperation and constant dialogue with the service provider. Completed pages were made available online using an unpublicized web address and could be viewed by the project team. Following a number of test runs, the homepage officially went online on 6 April 2004 at **www.wald-zentrum.de**.

Putting the homepage online, however, was not at all the end of the project. Regular updates are critical to the continued success of the web site.

Fig. 2: www.wald-zentrum.de: Example Page



Effects of PR Measures

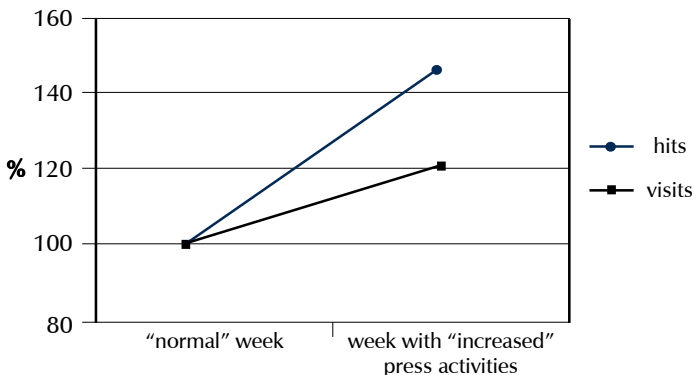
A press release to the local and specialized media accompanied the launch of the web site announcing the new web site and

**Give Them
a Reason
to Talk
about
Themselves**

briefly described its structure and contents. On the basis of a cost-benefits analysis, the web site has not yet been entered in any editorially designed search engines (e.g. www.yahoo.com). It will still be possible to apply to these service providers and make the site searchable at any time in the future. It seemed more expedient to inform the actual target groups of the new web site by means of word of mouth and in mailing campaigns. A study conducted by the marketing research company "Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS)" confirms that 18 percent of regular web site visitors become aware of a web site through personal recommendation, while only 10 percent find out about it through search engines.

It is a well-known fact that it is difficult to make evaluations in the field of PR, and, unfortunately, this also applies to measuring the success of a homepage. Nevertheless, a number of different providers offer to supply server statistics. This so-called "log file analysis" indicates how many "visits" and how many "hits" there are on a web site per month and per day, who accessed the Centre for Forest Ecosystems site from which other site, how many visitors come from which different countries and much more. What we can say about www.wald-zentrum.de is that the number of visits in a week with "increased" press activity – i.e., the appearance of an article spread over several pages, complete with picture material, in a forestry magazine and a several-page interview in another forestry magazine – increased by 21 per

Fig. 3: www.wald-zentrum.de: Hits/Visits



cent compared to a “normal” week. In the comparison of the number of hits for the same period, this figure amounts to 46 percent (Fig. 3: www.wald-zentrum.de: Hits/Visits). This is a clear indication of the positive influence that accompanying press activities have on the frequency of web site visits. Of course, the period under review of just one-and-a-half months is insufficient to provide conclusive results. But it has become clear, however, how important it is to track this development and to skillfully employ the corresponding PR measures to improve these statistics or to keep them at a satisfactory level.

To encourage visitor loyalty and win new visitors, it is necessary to update the web site regularly. It would, however, not be practical to get each tiny update done by an external service provider. Consequently, the Centre for Forest Ecosystems decided to implement a content management system – a platform that facilitates the change or entry of new data and requires little or no knowledge of programming. The project team was briefed on this system and can now take care of smaller modifications without changing the actual web site layout.

The feedback from the press and the general public has been consistently positive. The web site development team has been commended on the creation of an informative homepage, that offers adequate user guidance and has a nice layout. A range of inquiries from different persons/institutions asking to be added to the link list is one convincing proof of visitor satisfaction.

Conclusion

Creating a homepage is a carefully planned, well thought out process. It is an illusion to believe that keeping up-to-date such a homepage does not involve a lot of time. New texts must be written and the relevant image material prepared on a regular basis.

In closing, however, we would like to point out that a homepage is the appropriate instrument for advertising the Centre for Forest Ecosystems. But despite all the euphoria propagated about the opportunities offered by the World Wide Web, we still have to say that simply having a homepage is not enough. Successful press and public relations work requires a wide range of different measures that can be targeted to the specific dialogue groups and used to support other pertinent activities.

How to Finance Professional Forestry Training

Magdolna Stark

Period of Time: 01/2001 – 12/2001

Problem: Lack of funds for practical forestry training.

PR Instruments Used: Collaboration with partners; events (e.g. forest field trips or excursion); image brochure; lobbying; press conference; press release; round table discussions.

Causes of Success: Identification of the target group; interactive communication; personal, informal contacts with decision makers. ◀

Introduction

On a regular basis, universities in Hungary receive subsidies from the government to finance their academic educational programmes. – The level of funding depends on the number of students. However, this funding does not cover high-level professional training in practical knowledge and skills which is vital for the students' future career. As professional training in forestry is comparatively more expensive than training in other fields it is essential to mobilise funds from other sources.

By law, in Hungary private-sector enterprises must spend 1.5% of their costs of wages on professional training, which have to be invested into training measures of *non-academic, technical schools*. Only 75% of these funds can be used by the private company to invest into a secondary technical school of their choice. As practical training is essential to *academic* education as well, in the year 2000 the Faculty of Forestry at the University of West Hungary, Sopron, decided to challenge the existing law with the aim to become eligible for support through private sector funding. In view of the fact that a modification of this law is not only relevant to the professional training of forestry engi-

▶ **Building
Coalitions**

Identifying
Target
Groups

neers but also to the practically oriented agricultural education, we established a partnership with agricultural faculties.

The obvious *target audience* of our communication program were the members of parliament, who are in the position of initiating and executing modifications of legal regulations. The Faculty of Forestry decided to focus on the Parliament's Agricultural Committee, particularly targeting members of the Forestry Commission.

From earlier communications with our partners and members of parliament it had become obvious that the relevant decision-makers were not aware of the above-described constraint the faculties had to face. Thus the problem was not caused by an intended discrimination of the universities, but by a mere lack of information. As communication instrument we therefore used the personal contact with members of parliament through *round table talks* and a *field trip*.

A field trip was organised for members of the forestry commission aiming at demonstrating the type of practical experience that students are exposed to. With the help of a local forestry company that provides the venue of practical training, the members of parliament realised the importance of practical forestry education and the need for adequate funding.

PR Instruments

1 Lobbying

In order to initiate discussions among members of parliament, the subject was first to be included in the agenda of one of the Forestry Commission's meetings. Since an ordinary letter suggesting such an agenda item did not seem to be promising, the head of the forestry faculty in close cooperation with the forestry association which represents the forestry business community decided to work towards this end through direct personal contacts. As a representative of the forestry association is always present at the meetings of the members of parliament and knows them personally, he was the right person to persuade them to discuss the problems of higher forestry education, including the question of financing practical training, in their meeting.

Personal,
Informal
Contacts

2 Collaboration with Partner

Since the government budget for education is not likely to increase, financial support for practical training of university students would naturally lead to a reduction in allocations to secondary technical schools. In anticipation of strong opposition against such developments by the lobby of technical schools, it became vital for **higher education institutions** to unite and build a counter lobby, demonstrating that the use of modern educational equipment and methods in higher education is not less essential than in professional secondary training. The necessary political weight could only be created by a common effort of all university faculties.

The **local forestry company** plays a significant role in the practical training of forestry students. Thus it was also in their interest to obtain financial support for professional training. By using its connections to influential people it participated effectively in the lobbying campaign. Preparing and organising the field trip for the members of parliament was also an essential contribution component of lobbying.

Collaboration with the **National Forestry Association** also turned out to be indispensable because its representative takes part in the meetings of the Forestry Commission and thus has personal contacts to members of parliament – he could persuade them to place the issue of higher education on their agenda.

3 Image Brochure

An image brochure is particularly suitable to introduce an institution and its activities to a target audience.

We had several brochures about the different courses given by the faculties to inform secondary schools and interested future students. Although these brochures included practical training as well, their presentation did not seem to convince the members of parliament of the importance of this issue. Thus we compiled an appropriate brochure showing the professional activities of the faculty in more detail focusing particularly on practical training. A short description of each participating institution and their achievements was also a part of this new image brochure.

4 Round Table

It is commonly established that personal discussions usually have a much more convincing effect than any excellently written material. Forging personal alliances is essential and can be achieved by means of round table talks. We succeeded in inviting the Forestry Commission to hold an extra-parliamentary meeting at the Faculty of Forestry in Sopron. The situation of higher forestry education was one of the issues of the meeting, which provided excellent opportunities for teachers, professors and students to express their opinion and to give immediate professional answers to the questions raised by the members of parliament.

5 Forest Field Tour

Organising a forest field tour seemed to be a useful way of clarifying the issues discussed during the round table talk. On a field tour the importance of a forester's practical work can be demonstrated. What can be more convincing than giving a lecture about the success of tending young regeneration in creating high-value old growth beech stands when both the old and young forests can be inspected by the participants? Such an example underlines the important role of practical education for successful forest management and the need for adequate funding.

Educators and trainers who take part in the field tour can share their practical experience and provide further information. The usually more relaxed atmosphere during the field trip greatly contributes to informal discussions and exchange of views. In a situation like this competition among political parties is less pronounced and the members of parliament jointly seek solutions.

6 Press Conference

Press conferences are a means of creating awareness among the public by using the media. This will in turn lead to pressure on those who are responsible for solving the problem. After being informed about the round table talk, representatives of the media (i.e., the press, regional radio and television) conducted interviews with the chairman of the Forestry Commission and the Dean of the Faculty. The interviews were successful because they conveyed positive messages and a strong commitment partly sparked by the fresh memory of an exciting field trip.

7 Press Release

Statements were released to the press on a regular basis informing both the professional and the general public about the progress made on the issue. Subjects covered in these statements included the current access to financial resources for training, the extra parliamentary meeting held with members of parliament at the Faculty of Forestry, University of West Hungary, and the subsequent proposal by the commission. These statements aimed at attracting attention of those decision-makers who are responsible of financing professional training and encouraging them to revise the allocation practice.

Process of Implementing PR Instruments

- Firstly, we looked for partners who were interested in joining our course and whose collaboration we could count on. We had meetings and reached an agreement.
- We then issued a press release about the present legal regulations regarding financial support for professional training and about the situation of higher educational institutions.
- To convince politicians in parliament we invited the Forestry Commission of the Parliament's Agricultural Committee to hold an extra-parliamentary meeting at the University in Sopron. In addition to the formal written invitation lobbying was also necessary in order to achieve that the issue of higher education was put on the agenda and that the commission accepted the invitation.

With the extra-parliamentary meeting of the Forestry Commission agreed to be held at the University in Sopron, we could start preparing the round table talk and the forest field tour.

- Preparing an image brochure. The various institutes of the faculty agreed on the main aspects to be presented in the brochure and prepared their contributions. We used this material, as well as expressive photos and illustrations to compile the brochure.
- To organise a successful forest tour we consulted the local forestry company regarding the best spots and

routes for professional demonstrations and suitable means of transport.

- Representatives of the media were invited to the press conference following the round table talk and to the forest field tour.
- We issued a press release about the extra-parliamentary meeting of the Forestry Commission.
- Heads of Institutes of the Faculty of Forestry, the manager and professionals in charge of practical training in the local forestry company and members of the forestry association were invited to the round table talk.

Extra-parliamentary Meeting of the Forestry Commission

- The Heads of Institutes reported about their educational achievements and about the difficulties in financing practical training.
- During the forest tour the members of parliament could complement their knowledge about issues in forestry professional training, about the importance of practical training in forestry and about its funding requirements.
- Journalists also took part in this programme, and wrote about the importance of the issue. The president of the Commission gave an interview for the local television and radio station.

Direct Costs of PR Measures

- The Institutes of the Faculties of Forestry spent time on writing their presentations for the image brochure. Costs of editing and printing were borne by the Faculty.
- Transportation costs to the nearby forest (10 km away) were financed by the local forestry company.

Effects of PR Measures

- The partner forestry company accepted collaboration and the members of parliament showed interest in the forest field tour.
- The effect of lobbying can be measured by the success of persuading the members of parliament to put the issues of higher education on the agenda, and hold their meeting at Sopron, the only place in Hungary offering higher forestry education. After studying the image brochure and motivated by the round table talk, and the successful field tour, the Forestry Commission took the initiative and managed to get the support of other committees. Finally the law was modified by parliament in that half of the financial support given to schools by enterprises can now be granted to universities. Convincing the enterprises that it is worth financing the professional training of the Faculty of Forestry has also been successful.
- The press conference and the press release helped draw the attention of the public and of professional enterprises on forestry education. The effects of the local media became visible by the growing interest of people and different organisations, and forestry companies expressed their willingness to allocate their financial support to the professional training of the Faculty of Forestry.

Conclusion

Through the allocated financial support the faculty could increase its training budget by 20%, which enabled significant modernisation of the equipment used in practical training. We reached our aim by using several mutually reinforcing PR instruments. Problems, like inadequate laws and regulations should not prevent you from attempts to change such situations. As shown here, through the use of appropriate communication tools you can gain excellent results.

The "April – the Month of Forests" Campaign

Katarína Sládeková

Period of Time: 04/2002

Problem: Decrease in funding for forest research; Lack of legitimization from both forestry stakeholders and general public.

PR Instruments Used: Seminars; exhibitions; sports championship; publications; demonstrations; press releases.

Causes of Success: Target oriented; right time for application of PR instruments; use of a traditional, symbolic event. ◀

Introduction

The forests in the Slovak Republic cover more than 40 per cent of the territory. At present, more than 42 percent of forests make up the state forests; the rest represents other non-state forms of ownership. The Slovak Republic belongs to the most advanced countries in the field of forestry. The management of forests which is based on systematic planning has a history of about 200 years. Organised forestry research has also a long tradition in Slovakia and commenced at the Central Forest Research Station in Banská Štiavnica, a predecessor of the present Forest Research Institute Zvolen, in the 19th century.

Public relations activities in the forestry sector date back to 1946 with the so-called "April – the Month of Forests" campaign. That year, a Message of the Czech and Slovak Forests was published in the journal *Lesnická práce* (Forestry Practice), a monthly journal for forest



science and practice. The journal presented a message about forests to the whole nation. In that message it is stated that the forests cannot provide on a sustainable basis more goods and services than they are able to substitute through their growth and regeneration. Thus, society needs to understand the role of forests and the support required to secure this role for a long period. The “Week of Forests” was therefore organised every year and aimed to inform the public about the importance of forests to society. In the Czechoslovak Republic this promotional week on forests and forestry was a new PR measure. In other countries such campaigns had been started much earlier and were the response to large-scale deforestation with a negative impact on water availability. In Czechoslovakia the situation was different. The week was a commemoration of past generations of foresters and their work for the conservation and sustainable use of forests.

In April 1949, the “Week of Forests” was held for the last time. After that, the campaign was extended to the whole month of April. Even though the period of socialism was characterized by various campaigns aimed at propagation in the name of socialism, the campaign “April – the Month of Forests” has had favourable returns and people have accepted it till the present time. It is safe to assume that everybody who belongs to the generation grown up before the fall of communism in 1989 associates the word April with the month of forests.

After 1989, the campaign weakened. Representatives of the forestry sector did not pay as great attention to the campaign as in the period before the Velvet revolution in 1989 due to a large number of other pressing societal issues that resulted from the transformation towards a market economy.

By 1990, forestry in Slovakia had been through the complex process of transformation but this process had not been completely finished. The investments into silvicultural operations decreased due to a significant reduction in subsidies from the state budget. Every year the financial resources for forest research declined as well. Despite reduction of state support for forest science and research, both the forest stakeholders and the general public consider the means at hand in these institutions as very high compared with the research results offered. Forest workers and workers of related professions as well as the general public do not have sufficient information on forest research results and their

usage. Differences in opinion between representatives of the forestry sector and wood processing sectors, as well as activities of nature conservation associations criticizing forestry practices have contributed to a bad public reputation of the forestry profession. In April, traditionally designated as the month of forests, representatives of forestry draw public attention on forests and forestry mainly through the press. This includes addresses in the journal *Les (Forest)*, which is the journal of foresters, forest owners and forest friends, and short articles in newspapers and their specialized supplements such as *Náš Les (Our Forest)* which is the supplement of *Rol'nícke noviny (Farmer's Newspaper)*. The majority of events are organized by forestry, forestry related organizations and schools emphasising the importance of forests and forestry for society. The aim of the "April – the Month of Forests" campaign carried out by the Forest Research Institute in April 2002 was to increase the trust of people in the work of forest scientists through giving information about current specific forest problems as well as on the latest results of forest research.

PR Instruments Used

In the 2002 campaign "April – the Month of Forests", the Forest Research Institute Zvolen (FRI) used the experiences gained from the campaign in previous years and selected PR instruments that had proven most effective. These included seminars, exhibitions, a sports championship, publications, demonstrations and press releases. Two seminars and one instructional event were implemented targetting mainly the professional public. In addition, the FRI participated in the *Gardenia*, a popular exhibition about gardening that is enormously attractive among Slovaks. The FRI also acted as organizer of the Championship of Foresters of the Slovak Republic in Orienteering Hike.

The first seminar titled "Production and Use of Reproduction Material of Tree Species under the Conditions of Present Legislation" was held at the FRI – the Centre of Forestry Seed Service in the town of Liptovský Hrádok, Central Slovakia on 4 April 2002. The aim of the seminar was to provide participants with state-of-the-art knowledge about the current legislation within the sphere of seed sources management, production of reproduction material and its utilization in forest regeneration, as well forest seed and nursery management. The seminar focused

**Identifying
Target
Groups**

mainly on the information needs of users and producers from the non-governmental sector. The idea of organizing such a seminar originated from the results of a survey conducted by the journal *Les*. Its editors addressed respondents with the question "What is your experience with the application of the Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic on reproduction material and its implementation and achievements in forestry practice?" The Decree entered into force on 1 March 2001, thus the respondents had gained experience with its application of about one year. The opinions varied greatly and many respondents, particularly those working in the non-governmental sector viewed the Decree as complicated.

Some days later on 10 April 2002, an instructional event entitled "Management of Riparian Stands in the Region of the Danube Waterworks and Lower Reach of the Rivers in Slovakia" was held at the FRI station in Gabčíkovo, in the South of Slovakia. The management of riparian stands in this region requires specialised technology and machines. The FRI designs suitable machinery that meets the various ecological criteria of sound management of riparian forests. As the application of these technologies in the field of water management is not widely known, FRI decided to organize this event.

The seminar "Actual Problems in the Protection of Forests 2002" was held from 18 to 19 April 2002. It took place at FRI's Centre of Forest Protection Service in the town of Banská Štiavnica near Zvolen, Central Slovakia. Seminars on similar topics have been organized every April since 1992. Before, annual meetings of forest protectionists of the state forest administration were held in April. In 1992, non-state owners and private users of forests already existed as a result of decentralisation and reprivatisation. As these private owners were very aware of the importance of forest protection issues, the seminar was a good opportunity for them to learn about the latest developments. In the introductory lectures of the seminar the Forestry Section of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic and the Centre of Forest Protection Service presented an analysis of the most important problems and trends related to forest protection in the country. The main lectures given by professional staff of the forestry administration, forestry research organisations, forestry schools and other forestry expert institutions were dealing with specific problems of the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources in Slovakia. The Seminar in 2002 focused on a wide

array of forest stakeholders including forest land owners, qualified forest managers, workers of the state forest administration, forestry institutions and other parties in one way or another concerned with forests.

Gardenia, an international gardening exhibition, has been organised since 1996 and attracts many gardeners, friends of flowers and bonsais, nature lovers and conservationists. In 2002, Gardenia was held at the international exhibition center of Nitra, Western Slovakia from 18 to 21 April.

During that exhibition, two other exhibitions took place at the same center – the 5th International Exhibition Bonsai Slovakia 2002 and 7th Exhibition of Techniques and Technology in Protection and Creation of the Environment called Enviro 2002. The FRI was present at Gardenia with an own exhibition booth.

At the end of the month, from 28 to 30 April 2002, the Slovak Championship for foresters in orienteering hike was organized in Modra, in the western part of Slovakia. The Championship with international participation at the same time served as qualification for the European forester's championship. Participants in the race included forest owners and users, employees of forestry expert organizations, employees of commercial forestry and wood processing enterprises, teachers, students and graduates from forestry and wood processing schools and their families. As an employee of the Forest Research Institute Zvolen has for a long time been involved in this sport as racer, referee and organizer of racings in orienteering at various levels including the European championship, the FRI was entrusted with the organization of this championship.

Process of Implementing PR Instruments

Both seminars and the instructional event had been prepared by professionals of the FRI over a period of four months starting in early 2002. The work was supervised by the leading scientists and research managers of FRI.

1 The Seminar "Production and Use of Reproduction Material of Tree Species under the Conditions of Present Legislation"

First, a list of potential participants was prepared by the organizational committee of the seminar. Invitations were distributed

according to the list. Lecturers were asked to send their contributions for publication. Press releases about the seminar were sent to various press agencies, selected daily newspapers, and TV and radio stations. During the seminar, a total of 10 professional contributions were presented, of which 8 were prepared by researchers of the FRI.

The seminar also included presentations by private companies about their forest nursery practices. After the seminar, reports about the seminar programme and results were published in the journal *Les* and the *Rýchle informácie* (Quick Information), the quarterly FRI newsletter. The institute's staff edited and printed the proceedings using in-house facilities, and sent them to the participants by mail. The Union of the Slovak Scientific and Technical Societies acted as coorganiser of the event. Participants paid registration fees and also covered the costs of the proceedings. All in all, the seminar costs amounted to 840 USD.

2 The Seminar Titled "Actual Problems in the Protection of Forests 2002"

The organizational committee of this seminar had similar duties as the one described above. A representative of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic assisted the organisational committee to develop the seminar programme. The participants very much appreciated the fact that the proceedings were given to them beforehand. In the first session remedial measures in forests affected by air pollutants, as well as forest fire control were presented. In further sessions, specialists from the FRI informed about the latest knowledge from research projects dealing with various aspects of forest protection and possibilities of practical application of new methods in the field. Invited lecturers, most of them staff of the FRI, followed by Technical University in Zvolen, representatives of forestry enterprises and the state administration of nature and landscape protection presented 25 professional contributions. In a special two and half-hour session, 14 producers and distributors of tools, instruments and forest protection products enriched the seminar programme with latest information about their offers. Besides *Pro Silva Scientiae* – a non-investment fund – the Slovak Academy of Agricultural Sciences and the Union of the Slovak Scientific and Technical Societies, the Technical University in Zvolen also acted as coorganizer of the event in providing its campus as a venue for the seminar. The costs of the seminar were covered through the registration fee, the fees collected

from companies presenting their forest protection products, and from the contribution of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic for the printing of the proceedings. The costs for the organizers were 2500 USD which were spent for the preparing and printing of the proceedings, the technical provision of the seminar, and the wages of workers organizing the seminar. In previous years, as a part of seminar programme the best workers in the Slovak forestry sector were awarded medals for their achievements in further developing and improving forest management in the country. In 2002 this award ceremony was moved to the programme of another important Slovak-wide event held under the auspices of the President of the Slovak Republic on the occasion of the International Year of Mountains (in June 2002).

The opportunity of organizing seminars given to FRI has been used extensively for the dissemination of research results generated by FRI. In both seminars various information material and publications were placed in an exhibition booth. The display included leaflets about the FRI, brochures about the forests in Slovakia, recent scientific publications on topics close to seminar themes.

3 The Instructional event “Management of Riparian Stands in the Region of the Danube Waterworks and Lower Reach of the Rivers in Slovakia”

The planning process for the instructional event essentially followed the same steps as described for the seminars. The programme of this instructional event consisted of two parts. During the first theoretical part a member of FRI introduced the participants to the basic problems of stand management in riparian forests. The second part included practical on-site demonstrations in the forests of the Danube old river basin. In total, four stand tending and harvesting machines were presented by the workers of both the FRI and the private forest enterprise Danube Watershed. This company uses the machines in their regular operations and could therefore share their experiences in stand management activities. Advertising material prepared by FRI staff was handed out to all participants. Tending measures in poplar stands were also demonstrated on research plots of FRI's Gabčíkovo Research Station. Scientists presented the results of their findings in an easy-to-understand manner. The instructional event concluded with a social event providing

opportunities for informal discussions and exchange of experience.

A report about the course of the event was prepared and published in the national-wide journal *Les* and the quarterly newsletter of the FRI – *Rýchle informácie*. Participation was free. The costs to the FRI and the Danube Watershed for organizing this event amounted to 3125 USD. It should be noted that a substantial part of the costs was associated with the transport of machines to the demonstration site.

4 The Exhibition “Gardenia”

Planning and preparation for the FRI information booth at the exhibition *Gardenia* began in the first quarter of 2002. The organizer of *Gardenia* invited the FRI also in 2002 to participate in the exhibition because of its successful participation in the previous years. The display concept developed by the Institute essentially included information about the Forestry Arboretum *Kysihýbel* and a presentation about one of FRI’s scientific success stories on in vitro propagation. The Arboretum, an interesting area under the ownership of the FRI near the town *Banská Štiavnica*, was established in 1900. In addition to its scientific and research function, this protected area has also an educational purpose targeting both professionals and the general public. The necessary mounting devices and other facilities for the information booth were provided by the exhibition company. The information material together with publications about the Arboretum was produced by FRI. During the exhibition, a research scientist of the Institute was present at the booth and provided further information to interested visitors. The total expenses of the FRI associated with participation in the exhibition amounted to 415 USD, comprising predominantly the salaries and travel expenses of the Institute’s staff. Printing of the information material was carried out at FRI through in-house facilities and thus the costs were negligible.

5 The Championship on Orienteering Hike

The FRI was entrusted by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic, the Association of Employers in Forestry in Slovakia, Trade Union and the Union of the Slovak Scientific and Technical Societies with the organization of this national Championship. The event had its own logo. It appeared on the invitation

cards which were distributed throughout Slovakia to individuals according to the list of target groups. In February 2002 an eight-member organizational committee consisting of FRI staff began with the preparations for the Championship. Some larger private companies sponsored the event. Registration was open for racers until one week before the opening the Championship

The competition was organized according to the rules of orienteering hike, whereby men and women were classified by age into 5 categories. In addition to the competition also a professional excursion was organised. The non-state company Lesy Modra Ltd. presented its activities during the excursion focussing on forest parks and providing the Championship's participants with an opportunity to visit the 640-hectare Forest Park Modra in the beautiful environment of oak and beech forests. The excursion programme ended with a climb of a look-out. Apart from the title "Champion of Foresters of the Slovak Republic in Orienteering Hike", the winners also received diploma certificates, material prizes and gifts. The latter were donated by the main sponsor of the event. The Championship participants paid a registration fee, which the organizers used to cover the transportation to the venue and the excursion, maps, technical provisions, prizes for winners, as well as a contribution for a final dinner. The total costs for the organizer amounted to 847 USD.

Effects of PR Measures

The impact made with the activities during the campaign "April – the Month of Forests" can be evaluated based on direct responses of event participants and visitors, and media reactions.

In total 75 producers of reproduction material and users of seed orchards participated in the seminar "Production and Use of Reproduction Material of Tree Species under the Conditions of Present Legislation". This seminar was organised for the first time. Due to its success the organizers decided to hold the seminar every year and to create a tradition of seminars of the Forest Seed Production Practice. These seminars could bring together new experience in the field of forest nursery practices and information about latest developments in the relevant legislation. It was also decided that the programme would be

extended to include a excursion which would introduce participants to interesting new practical results in forest seed and nursery management. Media attention to the seminar, however, was modest, because the seminar focussed on a rather specific topic within the forestry domain. Except for the two above-mentioned forestry journals that reported about the event, a summary about standards used in forest seed management appeared in one economic daily paper.

The seminar titled "Actual Problems in the Protection of Forests 2002" reconfirmed its good reputation among forestry professionals in Slovakia. Many interested parties participate in this annual event. In 2002, their number reached 223, which is similar to that of the previous years. Also guests from forestry research organisations in the Czech Republic were attending the seminar. As a response, we published brief articles informing about the main topics of the seminar in newspapers as well as in the morning news of the Slovak Radio. The Slovak Television had to cancel its participation due to another, unscheduled event.

In total, 40 foresters and workers from Slovakia and Hungary active in water management took part in the instructional event "Management of Riparian Stands in the Region of the Danube Waterworks and Lower Reach of the Rivers in Slovakia". The event drew the attention of local print media – two articles were published – and also the Slovak Radio included information on the event in its popular news-broadcast at noon. During the demonstrations of the equipment almost all participants asked questions and 4 forestry organizations expressed interest in the purchase of one of the machines. This success is based on the fact that organizers specifically invited those organizations and individuals with a potential interest in mechanised stand management in riparian forests. The participants received easy-to-understand theoretical and practical explanations which greatly helped them to purchase the most suitable equipment. Equipment and other research products developed by the Forest Research Institute have been offered also to non-forestry sector companies and were met with great interest creating new opportunities for applying forestry research results in other fields of land management.

The information booth of FRI at the exhibition "Gardenia 2002" attracted visitors from all over Slovakia. Many of them expressed their interest in the Arboretum and made good of their promise to visit the Arboretum during the following spring and summer months. Visitors included individuals as well as school groups. The visitor numbers of the Gardenia exhibition were higher than those of the traditional international engineering fair held on a far larger area of the exhibition center. 40 journalists were accredited, the Slovak TV advertised the exhibition, newspapers published the articles about it, direct shots in TV and radio broadcast were recorded. Bonsai exhibits attracted the people and Gardenia also benefited from the huge interest of Slovaks in bonsai trees.

The national Championship of foresters in orienteering hike was successful also because of the beautiful settings of the Small Carpathian Mountains which served as the venue of this event. In addition to sporting experiences, the participants through the excursion also obtained knowledge on the management of forests in that region. Together 42 racers took part in the competition, among them 8 from abroad (from Hungary and Ukraine). The FRI as an organizer of the Championship has strengthened its image vis-à-vis organizations working for the environment and people – for the improvement of the quality of life. The representatives of the media did not take part in the event. However, they were informed through press releases. Information about the competition and results of the Championship appeared in 2 local media, as well as in a nationwide newspaper, in the forestry journals and in a sports newsletter.

Conclusion

As a result of more than 50 years of annual implementation of the "April – Months of the Forests" campaign, people particularly in April are more open to PR measures in support of forests and forestry. The FRI is building on this opportunity of a traditional communication measure and has achieved very positive effects.

The Institute's scientists intentionally combined the communication within the science community and PR for forest science in a wider forestry context. A situation analysis with definition of the target groups formed the basis for systematic planning,

*Pick up the
Audience
Where It Is*

*Window of
Opportunity*

implementation and assessment of the PR measure. The results of forest science and research were communicated to the public in an easy-to-understand and simple language. Forest science of the FRI acted as science communicators. The FRI logo becomes more and more known among professionals and the general public. Public perception that forest science is capable of solving particular problems of society and individual has been strengthened. However, in future it will be necessary to reinforce the campaign "April – The Month of Forests". Thus far the general public has not been informed in April about the forests and forestry importance for life quality of people in such a massive manner as in the period of socialism. For the time being, April does not immediately cause an association among the young generation with the month of forests. The FRI will think about new PR measures which would be aimed at this target group. In 1998, the General Director of the Forestry Section of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic through the mediation of the journal *Les* – similarly as his predecessors in 1946 – called on co-workers and colleagues to push forward the interests and needs of the forest management. In that call it is stated that only we alone can help ourselves. It is a call for all who work in forestry whether at the level of ministries, state administration bodies or down to the lowest organizational units, (e.g. forest administrations managing municipal, church, community and private forests), to think how to improve the reputation of forestry among the society of the Slovak Republic. The FRI will consider organizing meeting of scientists and representatives of the media in the month of forests and will inform them about forest health conditions and the situation in the Slovak forest sector. In April, the FRI will prepare a Forestry Day, a meeting of workers of the whole forestry sector. FRI participation in exhibitions abroad was not used very often. However, this must change. For April, the FRI can prepare wide public focused information about forests, wood and forestry for posting on the Institute's web site and for publishing in printed format. A lot of opportunities to carry public support for forestry provides cooperation with the producers of the regular TV broadcasting *Lesu zdar* (Good luck forest). A cooperation of the Forest Research Institute Zvolen with the popular Slovak picture weekly magazines has thus far not been assessed sufficiently.

Participative Broadcasting for a Better Perception

Mangala de Zoysa

Period of Time: 03/1995 –

Problem: Low public perception and participation in harmonious utilization, conservation and protection of the forest and the environment.

PR Instruments Used: Mass media communication (television and radio program)

Causes of Success: Identification of the target group; provide the opportunity of participation; acting on media rules; providing confidence with easily understandable messages; give the media the chance to talk about themselves. ◀

Introduction

In pre-colonial times, Sri Lanka was a well-forested country and, due to its unique natural beauty, it was popular as the pearl of the Indian Ocean. During that time, the village community lived in harmony with the neighbouring forest environment and had its own privileges and a good deal of self-administration. Due to interference by colonial powers, opening up of land for agriculture and associated changes of the socio-economic conditions have drastically altered the composition of the forest, causing significant damages to the natural ecosystems.

Today it's not only the forest authority who bears the responsibility to rehabilitate large areas of degraded lands and ensure the sustainable management, conservation and protection of the forest ecosystems of the country, but also the public, which comprises several groups, namely Media Public (e.g. the mass media), Citizen – Action Public (eg. environmental interest groups), Local Public (e.g. forest neighbourhood) and the General Public (e.g. general citizen). – Public Relations (PR) has emerged in recent years as very appropriate expertise to mobilise the various

Identifying
Target
Groups

interest groups and the public at large to promote the conservation and sustainable management of forest resources. Beside others, media organizations in Sri Lanka have also taken the responsibility of improving public relations activities related to forest science.

One of these media organizations is M.B.C. Network (Pvt) Ltd., a private radio and television network in Sri Lanka. The network manages two radio channels: "Sirasa FM (Sinhala)" and "Yes FM (English)", and two television channels: "Sirasa TV (Sinhala)" and "MTV (English)". This network covers the whole country in broadcasting and telecasting the various programs through its substations. "Sampath Bank", a private commercial bank in Sri Lanka, sponsors the program.

PR Instruments

1 The Radio Program "parisaraya vinadiak (One Minute for the Environment)"

Since March 1995 "Sirasa FM" has a daily broadcast providing information related to environmental issues including forestry. The program is on air twice a day (at 7:25 a.m. and at 4:55 p.m) for about 2-3 minutes. This is for the convenience of the public who can listen to the program either in the morning or in the evening.

The main objectives of the program are:

- to disseminate knowledge and facts about the environment (e.g. forest ecosystems, animals, plant species etc.) through media professionals;
- to make the public aware of environmental problems (e.g. forest destruction, endangered species etc.); and
- to promote changes in the attitude of the public towards the needs for protection and sustainable natural resources management (e.g. reforestation, creation of nature reserves etc.).

2 The TV Program

“Sirasa TV” has been telecasting a daily program called “soba sampath (natural resources)” since February, 1998. This program is on air 3 times a day (at 10:25 a.m.; 6:25 and 8:25 p.m.) allowing the public to watch the program regularly. Unfortunately, the program has now temporarily been suspended due to a problem with the sponsor.

The TV program “Natural Resources” has been developed in order to supplement the information provided in the radio program “One Minute for the Environment” that is produced by the same broadcasting company (M. B. C. Network (Pvt) Ltd.). Both programs are based on the same sources, thus ensuring an adequate level of consistency and quality of the expert information. The program is implemented by the company’s own well-trained and experienced technicians.

The program includes events such as competitions, exhibitions, and tree planting campaigns organized by schools, societies and other organizations. Important messages (e.g. Animal grazing destroys the village forest.) are presented using local scenes showing the status and agents of forest damage, the forest actors involved, as well as measures to mitigate the problem. Many important and complicated issues (e.g. biodiversity conservation, ecosystem functioning) are discussed by invited scientists at the TV station or in the field. In order to attract the attention of the public the programs are edited according to best practices employed by the TV media. The complete draft version of the program is reviewed by forestry experts for scientific and technical correctness. In such programs, media personnel act as mediators.

*Produce
Events*

*Media =
Gatekeeper*

Process of Implementing PR Instruments

1 Collection of Information

A wide range of organisations and individuals provide information on various environmental problems, incidences, events, etc., either through mail, telephone or sometimes also through a visit to the radio station. On average, the producer receives more than 500 letters per week.

Most of the informants are university students and school children. They frequently report on what they have observed, heard, learned or read concerning environmental destruction (e.g. destructive timber harvesting), forest protection measures (e.g. biodiversity), establishment and management of forests and trees (e.g. plantations, agroforestry) and the latest developments in environmental policies and strategic approaches (e.g. environmental society). The general public, clergies, environmental interest groups, and senior citizens mainly complain about the threats to the environment through the private business sector (e.g. illicit fellings), politicians (e.g. patronizing behaviour), governmental and private development projects (e.g. deforestation in sensitive locations), or natural causes (e.g. flooding and soil erosion). Politicians, government institutions, and NGOs regularly send updated information on their favourable activities which they have implemented to preserve and protect the environment (e.g. reforestation and afforestation programs). Government officials such as police officers, forest officers, and civil administrators often report on current problems that need quick attention by the general public (e.g. adverse impacts of forest destruction). They confidentially seek assistance from the media to address the problems. These problems obviously cannot be resolved through normal legal procedures due to undue interferences of higher officers or politicians (e.g. destructive timber harvesting by large timber traders).

2 Development of Public Confidence

Effectively creating awareness about environmental issues which are not known by the general public (e.g. beautiful forest landscape) requires that listeners have a minimum level of confidence in the media organization. In order to develop this confidence only carefully researched stories that uncover the realities provide the background for trustworthy messages to the public. Based on this performance standard, the public will develop trust and the respect for the radio program. The radio channel very often broadcasts short songs such as “Sirasai para kiyanne (Sirasa tell the road)” and “Nirathura obe mithura (your friend forever)” in order to promote confidence of the public towards the program. The use of a specific music tune at the beginning of the program combined with an introductory statement announced by a very popular media speaker effectively captures the attention of regular listeners.

3 Sciences in the Program

University students and school children are advised to send their information along with an approval of their respective teachers or lecturers. The teachers ensure that the scientific background such as concepts, phenomena and research findings are correctly presented. In the event that unreliable information (e.g. about excessive harvesting) is submitted by the general public, relevant authorities are requested to clarify the issue in close consultation with the villagers concerned. Further, forest scientists in forest departments or universities are consulted before a piece of information is approved for publication. These specialists very often advise on complex problems that require high scientific competence. In some cases, forest scientists are asked to prepare independent scientific statements on highly contentious issues. This backstopping system employing forest specialists and experts reassures the media producer that the publicised information is reliable and accurate.

Most of the messages published through radio or TV are prepared either by scientists or by journalists with the assistance of scientists. The media producer does not change the contents of the information, but selects an appropriate method of presentation, simplifies language and wording, and compiles the program in a concise manner in order to attract as many people as possible.

*Interactive
Communication*

Effects of PR Measures

1 Public Responses/Impacts

A large number of university students and school children regularly listen to the program. Frequently, the students request copies of the messages for their study programs. They have formed many environment-related societies and continuously send information concerning their own environmental awareness programs and activities (e.g. tree planting campaigns). They themselves conduct "One Minute for the Environment" programs and establish "Parisara vinishchaya (environmental courts)" to punish environmental offenders (e.g. watering trees). The number of letters from students received by the media organizations is rapidly increasing.

The public has also more confidence in the program than governmental officials. The former usually urge the government to

take prompt action to protect the environment (e.g. to prevent forest destruction). In some cases the police could not ignore environmental offences caused by influential people because of the public pressure sparked by the radio program. Upon receiving information about environmental offences, the media organization first carefully establishes the facts and then informs the relevant parties and government officers. Most of the cases involving influential people can be solved or settled without going public. Although in some cases politicians and powerful business people have threatened the media for publicizing their misbehaviour related to environmental destruction (e.g. illicit timber trade), the majority of politicians and government officers have corrected their mistakes after learning about the media's intention to publicise the offences.

There is also a great deal of requests by the public for more information concerning the issues raised in the programs (e.g. rare and endangered species and their habitat). Many individuals repeatedly express their willingness to participate in or provide assistance to implement environmental projects (e.g. tree planting campaigns).

**Give Them
a Reason
to Talk
about
Themselves**

Leading newspapers have given wide publicity to the program. They describe the program as "One hour worth of one minute". Recently the program has won an Environmental Award.

Public response to the TV program was also very high. At some point there was even the demand to increase the frequency of broadcasting. Therefore, the M .B. C. Network (Pvt) Ltd is planning to resume the program soon.

Media personnel entering forest areas for recording and taking interviews have either obtained permission or are accompanied by officers of the forest department. Incidents and causes of environmental destruction (e.g. illegal timber trade) are recorded on video and supported by interviews of relevant staff of the police department, forest department, timber cooperations and the like.

2 Benefits to the Media

Experience has shown that the program is now very popular and the number of people listening as well as responding to the program is rapidly increasing. The popularity of the program has al-

so significantly enhanced the attractiveness of the radio channel for the purpose of commercial advertising which results in better earnings for the media company. On the other hand, producing a radio program based on environment is comparatively cheap and convenient. The cost of a radio program per month is approximately Rs. 100,000 (USD 1,020) while the TV program for a one-month period requires in total Rs. 540,000 (USD 5,510).

3 Future of the Programs

The M.B.C. Network (Pvt) Ltd is now planning to restructure both programs. The focus is on collecting information covering a diverse spectrum of environmental aspects and in this way producing a balanced program targeting different public interest groups. The media company recognizes the importance of sound scientific background that is necessary to make the program more accurate and credible. It is further realised that the media personnel requires adequately advanced training on environmental issues in order to successfully interact with scientists in the course of producing science-based programs.

Conclusions

As this success story shows media organizations in Sri Lanka have come to understand PR as an important tool for the promotion of sustainable forest and environmental management in Sri Lanka.

The forest and environmental program has efficiently and effectively reached all the public interest groups including scientists, policy makers, politicians and other stakeholders. The program greatly facilitated the collection, dissemination and sharing of a wide range of knowledge and information on forestry and the environment. Through these activities the mass media and the public have become more effective in protecting the forest and the environment from forces that cannot be controlled by the forest authorities.

Writing for Myself or for the Public?

“Tell It Simple – It’s Wrong; Tell It Complicated – It’s Incomprehensible”

Philippe Domont

Period of Time: 1990 – 1994

Problem: Urban population has few direct contacts to nature and forests (romantic expectations towards forests are partly not compatible with the realities of forest management); the media is strongly influencing public opinion.

PR Instruments Used: “Forest Guidebook for Curious People”

Causes of Success: Target-oriented; communicating to multipliers; answers to the questions of readers; few details – more confidence; suitable preparation time; teamwork among experts. ◀

Introduction

Sylvacom is a consulting company with expertise in forestry-related pedagogy, knowledge transfer and public relations. The “Forest Guidebook for Curious People”, which is presented in this case study, is based on contributions provided by forestry institutions in Switzerland (forest administration, forestry research) and designed as PR product targeting the general public. The Swiss Association of Foresters and the Swiss Federal Forest Office generously funded the project.

The book is an attempt to transfer to the general public expert knowledge related to forests and forestry. The contents is based on forest management concepts practised in Switzerland, notably multi-functional management approach, close-to-nature silviculture and public participation. However, with the exception of relevant expert knowledge provided by professional forestry institutions, they have not influenced the way the information is prioritised and presented in the Guidebook.

This work is a response to the known lack of understanding by the public of the philosophy and processes of sustainable forest resources management. The majority of the target audience are urban people who learn about environmental issues mainly through mass media often adopting a romantic approach to nature, which is not always compatible with the concept of sustainable ecosystem management. On the other hand, forestry as represented by well-trained specialists, technicians and administrators – has not yet found a way of properly communicating with the public.

Since their existence, forestry organisations and professional associations are interested in communicating with the public for the dissemination of scientific results. However, forestry professionals do not extensively publish transfer material using commercial editing houses and thus have so far been unable to penetrate the print market.

PR Instruments Used

1 Description of the Book

In 1999 this Guidebook was published in French, German and Italian editions.

The contents consist basically of 300 questions and answers which refer to the most important subjects in forestry such as botany, zoology, ecology, silviculture, forest history, forest economics, climate change, biodiversity and the like. The book also includes a brief section providing instructions for teachers on how to use the Guidebook. This section is intended to help forestry laypersons (e.g. school teachers, parents) to communicate forestry expert knowledge.

2 Why a Book?

The decision to design a booklet as an "information and PR instrument" had been taken mainly for practical reasons. Users of the product are:

- Foresters dealing with the public,
- teachers of primary and secondary schools,

- parents *and*
- individual forest and nature lovers.

These user groups need a practical and handy tool for their indoor and outdoor activities. It had been felt that a booklet would be the best way to address the major questions and issues raised by the public and to provide simple answers for non-specialised people. Four years later, we could also combine the book with complementary information on the Internet. The production of a CD would also be an interesting option, but it seems that commercial entities – with the capacity of marketing such a product – are not very interested.

3 A Book for Whom?

Potential beneficiaries of the book include friends of trees, forests and nature, curious people, especially teachers, parents, and grandparents who have to deal with curious people like children or who are curious themselves.

Despite the fact that the book was not written for forest professionals, our experience shows that it has satisfied certain information needs of forestry experts as well, for example for those who accompany school classes to the forest during their outdoor days or field trips. These experts appreciate the book very much as it contains a lot of information that was not readily available to them in the moment they needed it. Experience with the use of the booklet also shows that foresters lack basic training in successful communication to the public. The editor of the book does not exempt himself here: he has learned a lot while writing the book based on issues raised by the public.

Specialists may benefit from the book in the following three ways:

- Refresh and refine their knowledge,
- learn how to tell rather complex forest issues in simple terms in non-technical language, so as to be understood by different audiences,
- contribute to bridging the gap between the professional reality of forestry and the perception of the public.

Identifying
Target
Groups

Pick up the
Audience
Where It Is

4 Characteristics of the Book

The book has the following special features:

- The contents is based on questions posed by the public.
- It is written in a simple but precise and scientifically correct language.
- The text is short, avoiding any lengthy explanations.
- Drawings illustrate the statements, there are no photographs.
- Different sections are linked in an easy-to-understand manner.

A subject index allows the user to quickly access topics of their interest.

5 Aims and Message

The book was not primarily created to convey a message, but to provide practical information on how to improve the relationship between the public and forestry stakeholders. Communication always contains a message. In this book the reader learns that

- forest and trees are very interesting and important for society;
- everybody can enjoy discovering more about forest;
- everyone is able to understand the need for adequate forest research activities; and
- society is benefiting from the work of forest scientists and forest managers.

Provide
Confidence

Process of Implementing PR Instruments

1 Creating the Book

The basic idea of publishing a book to address issues of public concern had emerged from the work of several pedagogical

projects in the 1990ies. It took about 4 years to accomplish the task – i.e., from first discussions between the editor, those providing the contributions the contents of the book is based on and graphic designers and the finished publication involving the entire range of activities such as work organization, coordination, fundraising, writing and reviewing the text and the final selection of an appropriate publisher and printing press.

**Communication
Strategy**

The book is the result of a team work of people of very different expertise who contributed to accomplishing the task. Scientists from various specialisations in the field of forestry selected and reviewed the contents. The illustrator with background in forestry provided significant assistance to the editor. Upon careful review the sponsors and other supporting partners approved the contents. Experience shows that a careful selection of collaborators is indispensable. One wrong choice may jeopardise the entire project.

**Expert
Knowledge**

It cannot be overemphasized that all the questions posed in the book originate from the public audience. They were not created or changed by forestry professionals or scientists. The questions asked and concerns expressed by the public were collected from two types of sources over a period of 10 years:

- Forest camps and field excursions for school children: Long before environmental education became a fashion boys and girls were given the opportunity to observe nature and gain experience with forest ecosystems and operations. Over several years questions arising from these field days were collected and compiled in a pedagogical document. About 40% of all the issues raised in the Guidebook are based on this collection.
- Field excursions for adults: Being responsible for media and public relations at the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL) the author himself collected a lot of questions asked by adults, especially in training courses for school teachers or by participants in field excursions.

The author contacted about 30 experts, most of them scientists, on issues not sufficiently elaborated in literature, and teaching material. For example at the time of collecting the questions,

issues like “carbon and forestry” or “climate change and growth behaviour of trees” were rather new topics but already relevant to the general public.

2 Costs

The costs of the first edition in one language comprising 230 pages with 300 questions including 400 small drawings complete with graphical work and ready for printing, but without printing costs amounts to a total of USD 80,000 or USD 350 per page. Assuming payment of honoraria for providers of contributions the contents of the book is based on, and for editors the total costs would be USD 160,000 or USD 700 per page.

For the production of three editions (French, German and Italian) including graphical work an amount of USD 180 per page (average of $3 \times 230 = 690$ pages) had to be paid. Taking into account the honoraria this amount would increase to USD 320 per page.

3 Time Budget

- *Management of the Project (3 editions, one each for French, German and Italian):*
700 hours
Elaboration of the concept, coordination, support for translators, illustrator and editing houses, contact to associations, specialists and sponsors concerned, fundraising, media work, financial management, monitoring and evaluation.
- *Editorial work: 800 hours*
Documentation, writing, controls, collaboration with drawer
- *Drawing: 400 hours*

Effects of PR Measures

Evaluation of Success:

Quantitative data:

- Sales volume,

- ranking in the sales list of the publisher (second position after a very popular book for ornithologists).

Qualitative data:

- Journalists' review,
- review in professional journals,
- feedback by users (in training courses or by discussions).

No systematic analysis has been carried out about users' perception. But a collection of some feedback reveals that

- the book is easy to read, brief and clear,
- one can find relevant information easily,
- my own questions are addressed in the book, *and*
- the book provides positive, friendly and constructive messages.

Conclusion

At the start of the project to develop this guide book the issue was to be clarified whether scientists should communicate what they know about forests or what the people wanted to know. A good communication strategy has to find out how people become motivated and feel comfortable by receiving information about forests. It's important to remember that today most of the people and especially children are confronted with excessive information. Communicating science information to the public is faced with the problem that simplified information is usually false and comprehensive information about complex issues is incomprehensible. The challenge is to present information in a correct, but simple and comprehensible way.

Editing a successful book about forests and forestry for the public needs a well planned strategy. Major elements include:

- Before thinking what to say, think about what your target group wants to know.

- Prior to the selection of communication instruments, think about the best way to reach your target group.
- Teamwork is sometimes difficult to organise, but the results are generally better.
- Good work needs time and it can be expensive. But bad work is always too costly.

Science Writing – A Promising Tool for PR in Forest Research

Reinhard Lässig

Period of Time: 1999 –

Problem: Too little presentation of scientific findings

PR Instruments Used: Science writing for newspapers, forest magazines, newsletters and Web pages.

Causes of Success: Professional work with the help of experts and training on the job; target-group-oriented; direct contact to the media; interaction of different PR instruments. ◀

Research Institutes – Treasury of Forest-Related Knowledge

Forest research has a long tradition in Central Europe because the cradle of European sustainable forestry is located there. In 1787 the first forestry school was founded at Dillenburg, Germany, and, besides teaching, the first research activities started soon. Since the 1870s, when the first research stations were founded, forest research has accumulated an enormous amount of forest-related knowledge in Germany, Austria and Switzerland*. Long-term investigation in all major forest types has a long tradition and has gained excessive data on tree and forest development. Even though the total amount of both research projects and findings of these institutes is almost impossible to summarize and analyze, it can be assumed that most of them have gathered a huge amount of scientific results since.

* Forest research in the German-speaking countries is being done at three governmental research institutes, at nine state research institutes which, as a rule, belong to the forest service in the federal states of Germany, and at six universities. The term “research institutes” used in this article summarizes them.

Based on an analysis of the publication statistics of 1992, 1997 and 2002 in Web of Science (oral message from A. Kempf, WSL), it can be assumed that this large accumulation of forest-related knowledge has only been partly published. Compared to the publication activity on forest related topics worldwide, the number of papers (at least one author from a German-speaking country involved) published in peer reviewed journals is small. Between 1992 and 2002 the number of papers dealing with this topic increased from 0.95 to 1.17 million (+ 23 percent) worldwide. At the same time the number of papers written by authors from the above mentioned countries rose from just 160 to 283 papers (+ 77 percent). There was – and possibly still is – a huge backlog in publishing on the international scale. The rise of 77 percent, however, indicates a large gap between the amount of knowledge accumulated and the number of articles published in scientific journals. Compared to the large number of publications worldwide it can be derived that the scientific potential for German-speaking scientists to publish in peer-reviewed journals must still be assessed as enormous. The long-lasting, reserved publishing activity on the international scale of the research institutes is probably due to the fact that until about 1990 they did not have a strong obligation to justify their scientific excellence or even its institutional existence by their publication intensity.

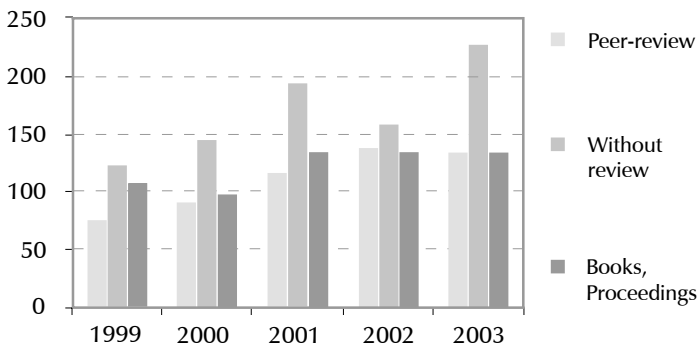
Besides the very few peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals, most of the research findings – at least if they were relevant to forest managers – were published in the series edited by the research institutes themselves or in forestry magazines written in German. Even though there are no reliable data available on the number of articles which have been published in German, it seems that this number has only slightly increased between 1992 and 2002. There might be two reasons for that:

- In the 1980s science started investigating “forest die-back” which resulted in a high number of projects, and subsequently, in publications as well. After this bump this topic became less attractive and in the 1990s the number of publications decreased slowly.
- At the same time the number of forest related journals and scientific series edited by research institutes decreased slightly. Some of them have dis-

appeared since, and some have merged together. In contrast to this trend technical transfer to practitioners again became more attractive in the last years which let the number of popularly written papers rise.

In the early 1990s, governmental funding got shorter in Switzerland, too. It became more and more relevant for research institutes like the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL) to justify its activities, to present its scientific success, and to transfer its findings to the customers and/or stakeholders as well. Besides other criteria the number of publications in peer-reviewed journals and the amount of citation are, today, the main indicators to rank scientific institutions among others in the world. Like at other research institutes in the German-speaking countries more and more scientists at WSL published their results and conclusions in peer-reviewed journals as well (Fig. 1). Besides public relations, i.e., media relations, knowledge transfer promoted by PR professionals became more and more important. The research institutes had to find a solution to the question how to get their research findings better transferred to different target groups.

Fig. 1: Annual Number of Publications, Published by authors of the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL) 1999-2003.



In the mid 1990s, WSL got to know how some research stations of the USDA Forest Service communicated their findings.

**Identifying
Target
Groups**

Referring to the stations' experiences it was obvious that WSL should be able to do both at the same time: to publish more intensively as well as to better focus on special target groups (i.e., foresters, conservationists, governmental decision makers, politicians). But as a national governmental research institute WSL has to consider also its obligation to justify its activities nationwide because of its mandate given by the government or by parliament. WSL, in general, has to meet two needs at the same time: it has to carry out its high-quality research on an international level and it has to transfer its findings on the national scale hoping that they will be realized. In times of shortage of federal funding, the research institute has to be more transparent and, therefore, it was a must to increase its technical transfer.

Science Writing – Making Research Popular

Focussing on knowledge transfer to a wider audience – there are several ways to do so: the institute could organize open houses, workshops, excursions, exhibitions, fairs or adventure trails for the public more often. Another possibility is to make its web site more customer-friendly and add more information. By intensifying public relations the institute could be more often present in the media.

But how to realize this attempt? A great number of scientists is not educated in transferring their knowledge into a popular language – at the beginning of their professional career scientific experience was the decisive attribute to get a job. Most of the transfer activities mentioned above require special skills in how to prepare scientific knowledge in a way that the public and the media are able to understand what the scientists want to say. Therefore, scientists need support from transfer specialists which were trained in public relations (PR) or (science) journalism. Educated science journalists are either employed by the media where they – independently – report on news from science. They work for larger newspapers, which regularly publish science pages, and either write their own features or edit those from freelancers. Other journalists work for science magazines in broadcast. Journalists who write or edit on behalf of large firms, research institutes or NGOs are usually called science writers. Sometimes, they might not work as independently as journalists at the media do. But science writers have

**Expert
Knowledge**

the big advantage that they usually have deeper insight in research and development.

Like the journalists, science writers, editors and PR-specialists know how to “translate” research findings into a language which is more comprehensible to the public. Usually they also know how these translated findings could be transferred to the public and to the media as well. These specialists are able to improve different products published by a forest research station and, also, to make it even possible to write and publish special articles which directly appeal to the public. Besides producing newsletters, annual reports, or other print products one could also be employed as a company spokesman.

Over the last twenty years, it has got quite popular in Switzerland to report science issues. Most of the national and regional newspapers regularly produce science pages. Besides salaried positions at the publishing houses there is also a number of freelancers specialized in science reporting. Since the early 1990s, the number of science writers in R&D and communication has also increased. It became a great need to the public to get detailed information about industrial products, science, environment or public administration.

As part of this inquisitiveness on environmental issues the public also wanted to know more about forest related topics. Therefore, and because of the above mentioned obligation to justify its activities, in 1998 WSL definitely went for more transfer of forest-related knowledge to the forest practitioners as well as the public. Another aim was to be cited in daily and weekly published newspapers and magazines more often. An increased competence in science writing should have been one contribution to reach this aim.

Effective Capacity Building

Considering the above mentioned goals it was necessary to optimize writing conditions, processes, and products as well as media relations. The question arose whether it was reasonable to employ professional science writers and editors at WSL to increase the number of articles or whether it was more effective to intensify the relation and cooperation with the editorial staff of

the newspapers. Finally the director of the research institute decided to do both because the two strategies pledged to have complementary effects. He hired a journalist for public relations who was well versed in press and TV, and the institute had one of its experienced scientists, who had a strong interest in knowledge transfer and PR, trained to become a science writer. Following it will be described how the training process of this forest scientist, the author of this paper, proceeded, how he enhanced his skills in science writing and what the impact of this procedure on the institute's publishing performance was.

1 How to Become a Science Writer

In this article, the general education possibilities in journalism starting right after school or following a bachelor or master degree in sciences are not being discussed. Yet, there are other ways to become a science writer. These other possibilities differ in length and value concerning educational content. They vary in intensity in terms of semester hours, and in journalistic and/or scientific specification. Most of the courses are provided either by public institutions like universities and colleges of higher education (one to two semesters), by public or commercial adult education centers or by publishing houses (journalist schools).

In 1999, WSL kindly promoted the author's efforts to take a part-time education in journalism at the State Adult Education Center of Zurich. To take this course it was required to have at least some experiences in publishing articles in the press and to actually work at least 20 percent as a writer or editor. It was assumed that this 18 months lasting side-line education required one school-day per week and half a day of homework additionally. This arrangement made it possible for the author to continue most of his daily business as usual.

The course provided knowledge in writing, editing, journalistic styling, freelancing, photography, Internet research, media sciences and media law. As an important part of the training, in order to get as much practice as possible, the participants had to constructively criticize the manuscripts of the others. Another issue was to produce a company magazine together, including planning, writing, editing, and making photos.

As a part of the educational program the instructor suggested the participants publishing at least one article in a national or

regional newspaper based on their main focus. Most of the participants achieved this goal; some using a consumer's topic, some a social issue and others a scientific one. The author, for example, published five articles in daily newspapers on subjects of general interest, and some in technical magazines on science topics. Another important outcome of this education was the conceptual work and the launching of a forest science newsletter in winter 1999. This newsletter is still being published quarterly, and it is a visible success of what the institute had invested in the authors' further education. Its print run rose from 2200 copies in the beginning to 3800 copies in summer 2004.

Though the author had had some contacts to the media before he had started the course, he was able to build up and intensify his contacts to the editorial staff of several newspapers during the course. Also he realized that the quality of his writing increased from month to month which enabled him to launch new ideas and articles to newspapers he had never had contacts to before. Even though he had published on different topics, he defined his niche in nature and forest sciences. Most of his articles suggested to the newspapers were accepted. Obviously, the editors appreciated the scientific experience he backs up with. Furthermore forest topics are generally of high interest to the readership, on condition that one article contains at least real news and its content is of public concern.

*Personal,
Informal
Contacts*

The Media: How it Looks from Inside

As in other fields of work it is a whole new ballgame to train oneself, for example in writing and editing, and to put newly claimed knowledge into practice successfully. For a sustainable output of science findings especially to the public it is not enough to launch new ideas and to get them published. The author needed practical experiences within a newspapers editorial office to better understand the making of science pages. He wanted to better understand the strategic approach of an editorial office and how this was functioning. Furthermore, he also needed an insight in how the editorial staff was realizing new project ideas (i.e., article series, science in a picture) and how the readership reacts to easily understandable science stories. Fortunately he came to an agreement with one of the largest daily newspapers in Switzerland and got the chance for a six weeks practical training in their science editorial department in summer 2001. What a challenge!

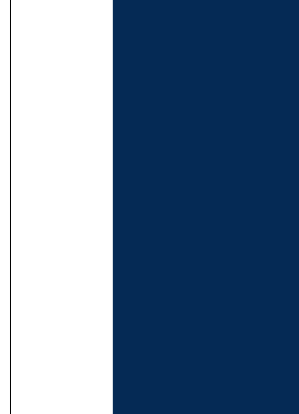
During this most instructive time the author learned that the scientific contents of an article is not the only important indicator for the editorial staff to decide whether or not an article is going to be published. First an article gets examined for its news contents, and then checked up for its public concern. These are the leading factors for the editor in compiling the daily news. In other words: As more as an article on science findings shows a direct effect on a possible benefit or loss for the reader the higher is the interest of an editor to publish it. Another indicator within this process is the fact of how often a global topic like forest, animals, climate etc. was covered by a newspaper itself during the last days or even weeks, and/or whether other newspapers or magazines have recently reported about the same topic. If there are too many actual and important messages or events in the row, they usually have priority to a science topic.

3 Rising to New Challenges

After getting a number of articles published in different newspapers the science writer had the idea to combine a number of topics WSL is well known for into one long article. After a number of severe winter storms he offered an article on "Storm Damage, Climate Change and Bark Beetles in Forests" to the science editorial staff of the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung", one of the leading Sunday's newspapers in Germany. In each edition the editors are focussing a double page on a scientific topic which must be of extreme public concern. The scientific expertise, the complexity of the topic, the popularly written text, and the quality of pictures and graphs made a successful combination of science knowledge and customer-friendly reading (Fig. 2). One year later the author got into contact with journalists of Swiss TV's science magazine. Now he tried to combine the WSL topics "Natural Forests and Scientific Collaboration with Russia" into a feature on forest research in the Urals. Together with the author three researchers managed to produce an eight minutes lasting video with a Swiss film team from Moscow, including the script and the editing of the spoken text.

These two examples show clearly that a science writer, embedded in a net of specialized researchers is able to place well prepared science topics to the public. After making these two experiences and establishing contacts with the editorial staff of numerous newspapers and TV, WSL should now be able to place almost every outstanding project on nature and forest sciences in

Fig. 2: Clipping from Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung, November 3, 2002, p. 64/65.



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crime, sports, culture, lifestyle). Therefore, the science writer has to split up his activities in different media (press, in-house productions, Internet).

Concerning technical transfer, a research institute with more than 400 employees doubtlessly accumulates an awful lot of information which could easily be transferred by even more than only one science writer. As proved by some of the research stations of the USDA Forest Service (i.e., Pacific Northwest Research Station in Portland, Oregon, and Southern Research Station in Asheville, North Carolina) up to four science writers and one or more editors are successfully optimizing their publishing activities. These research institutes are convinced that it is worthwhile to employ professional science writers helping them to disseminate the scientists' findings.

In the 1990s the public relations manager at WSL was the only person who supported a scientist to improve a manuscript which should be launched to a popular written newspaper or magazine. In addition to him, the author enabled the institute and its scientists to publish more articles written in a popular way. After the first editions of the forest science newsletter from WSL, the author also started to pre-edit the manuscripts written by his colleagues from science before they offered them to a newspaper or to a popularly written forest magazine. Editing the drafts helps to increase the quality of the manuscripts as well as the number of manuscripts accepted by this technical magazine. Moreover, the chief editor does not correct the scientist's manuscripts as he used to in former times. The greater number of articles has two major effects:

- The scientists are able to transfer more of their findings to landowners, foresters, and other practitioners, *and*
- the institute's research will be perceived by a wider audience and its reputation will be continuously rising.

Besides editing the above mentioned manuscripts and publishing the forest science newsletter, the author gets more and more involved in giving advice to scientists concerning the question where to publish their findings to reach their target audiences best. But editing is a most time-consuming work. To limit the increasing time of editing the author now helps to organize a

three days writing training for his colleagues from science. The demand for this course at WSL is great because the advantage of writing articles more adequate is clearly visible.

Another combination of PR and technical transfer is the publishing of Web pages. During the last decade it got quite popular to present science findings on the Internet. Writing good texts for the web is a challenging job. The sentences must be short and compact, but correct and complete, and the layout should be pleasing to the eye to transfer the content clearly and effectively. It is a real challenge to express the complexity of research projects and its findings in a few words to get anybody interested in the subject. It is thus much recommended to motivate one or two scientists to take a web editors training. The author had the chance to do this at the State Adult Education Center of Zurich. After finishing this course he now is able to support and develop the content of new customer-friendly web sites, Web pages, and Web projects. Concerning the making of Web pages, another important job is the development of modern layouts. WSL, today, employs three professional part-time Web publishers and one technical web-developer helping to do this.

The most recent web site is focussing on transferring findings from forest science to foresters and landowners in Switzerland. Together with a Web publisher, a freelancer and a team of forest scientists the science writer developed a prototype which provides knowledge on forest science (<http://www.waldwissen.ch>). This web site is currently being extended for the region of the Alps. The international web site, starting on October 1st, 2004, with its German version, is being developed by research institutes from Southern Germany (Freiburg and Freising/Munich), Austria (Vienna) and Switzerland (WSL). Other institutes from France, Italy and Slovenia plan to join this initiative within the next one or two years to finally provide actual knowledge for an audience in seven countries and in four languages (<http://www.waldwissen.net>, Fig. 3).

Just a First Step

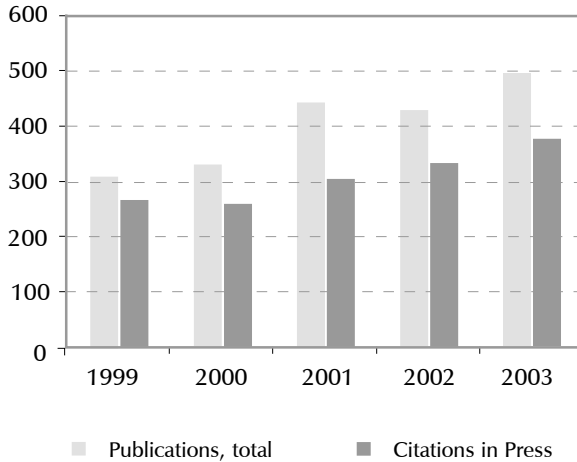
During the recent years it became obvious that it was worthwhile for WSL to train scientists in different fields of science

Fig. 3: Waldwissen.net (Forest Knowledge) – the New Web Site for Practitioners in Central Europe



writing and to employ PR and Web specialists to improve the public perception. Besides the increase in the number of the peer-reviewed papers between 1999 and 2003 (+ 79 percent), the number of not reviewed papers showed an increase of even 85 percent, whereas the number of books increased by only 25 percent (Fig. 1). All publication categories together showed a rise of 62 percent and the citations in the press, which could just partly be influenced by the institute, rose by 43 percent (Fig. 4). It would be incorrect to argue that the rise took place just because of the involvement of science writers and PR specialists. It were the scientists who understood that it is of profitable for them and for the institute as well to get more of their findings published and cited. However, roughly 5 to 10 percent of the total number of publications got published by the help of the science writer and the PR specialist. It is obvious that the know-how of writers and editors turned out to be essential for the further success of the institute in placing newsworthy articles in the media. If an institute does not incorporate this knowledge it should not be surprised of not being successful in working with the media.

Fig. 4: Number of Publications (Total of the Three Columns in Fig.1) and Number of Press Articles Published in Switzerland, in Which the Name of WSL Was Cited Completely (Source: Swiss Media Databank SMD, Covering All Major Newspapers and Magazines in Switzerland).



In the last few years, WSL has learned by experiences that many of the scientists have realized it to be meaningful to publish not only in international journals of the scientific community but also in national, regional and local magazines and newspapers. To optimize the communication of its findings, it is a reality that a research institute today has to do the splits. On one side, it has to present its findings on an international scale to get the reputation from abroad and, on the other side, it has to communicate with practitioners and with the public as well. The latter challenge can be achieved more easily if an institute has science writers in-house. They are usually much better informed about running projects and their degree of esteem by the scientists is higher than the one of the journalists. Because of their knowledge on the current research and on journalistic attempts, in-house writers are predestinated to help bring researchers in contact with journalists from the newspapers.

Even if there was a backlog in publishing popular articles till 1999, there is a clearly visible increase in the numbers of publications and citations which, hopefully, will continue to rise. Scientists, science writers and editors very much appreciate to have now more possibilities to make the institute's work better known to a larger audience. It is motivating for scientists to find their science findings being appreciated by the public and to realize that the practitioners are interested in implementing them. This success is a first step towards an intensified transfer of science findings to the target audiences as well as to the public.

Out of this awareness journalism and web publishing might get more attractive to scientists. Some of them have already taken a short training in journalistic or creative writing; some have attended courses in web publishing, communication and teaching. On top of that it was very motivating to hear from the supervisory authority that technical transfer is one of the important goals of governmental funded research for the next four years in Switzerland.

Conclusion

The summarizing conclusion shows how science writers and editors promote both PR as well as technical transfer of an institute. They also help to efficiently intensify the relation to the editorial staff of daily and weekly published newspapers and pre-edit manuscripts for technical magazines which have to be written in a popular way. But science writing does not just enlarge the number of articles in the newspapers. It also supports newly created publications like newsletters, technical bulletins, fact-sheets or even web sites and e-learning-tools. In any case science writing is an effective tool to transfer science findings to a wider audience and to attract public attention.

Compared to the large treasury of forest-related knowledge in the German-speaking countries, it seems that science writing is only in its initial stages at these research institutes. Most of the research institutes have their own newsletters or technical bulletins written in a popular style by the time, and foresters and other practitioners use these publications to put new knowledge

into realization. But there is still a huge amount of knowledge to be displayed.

The research stations of the US Forest Service are quite ahead of the Central European institutes. Their publication concepts are much more focussed on foresters, landowners and the public. To reach their goal in publishing scientifically correct but also understandably written articles or brochures, they employ a number of writers and editors. Additionally, they have a comparatively long tradition in transferring science findings via special advisory units, called extension services. These services communicate with anybody interested in modern knowledge on forests and forestry. In these advisory units there work specialists from universities and research stations as well as scientists, extension specialists and forest communicators.

Unfortunately, European forestry as well as the research institutes are in the tough situation of strict budget cuts at the time. Even if there is a strong conviction to intensify the activities in PR and technological transfer, it will be difficult to put more money and manpower into communication and extension activities. Therefore the above mentioned initiative of publishing forest related science findings from seven countries on the Internet might be the most time- and cost-saving intention in this direction. Irrespective of the mode of publishing (print, broadcast or Internet) science writing is a promising tool to transfer knowledge from natural and forest sciences to regional, national, and international audiences.

Public Relations and Communication for the Forest Sector Reform

Gaster K. Kiyingi

Period of Time: 8/1999 – 6/2003

Problem: Poor public image

PR Instruments Used: Conferences; newsletter (electronic version and hard copy); bumper stickers; radio adverts; calendars; circulation of briefing notes on key reform issues; publications; lobbying of advocacy groups.

Causes of Success: Identification of target groups; children as multiplier; building coalitions; interactive communication; cooperation with experts producing videos, etc. ◀

Situation Analysis and Problem Statement

Forestry in Uganda has suffered from a poor public image requiring public relations and communication efforts to create an awareness among the public of the importance of the forest sector for society. Public relations also play a vital role in the promotion of new approaches and reforms in the field of forest management, aiming at a wise use of forest and tree resources outside the government forest reserves. Public relations activities have also been important at the policy level, notably in the formulation of a new forest policy and the development and implementation of the national forest programmes.

Because of the low profile of the forest sector, one of the first necessary steps was to create an institutional environment that is conducive to the development of the sector. Within the framework of the sectoral planning process changes needed in the roles and structures of the different forestry institutions, and stakeholders have been identified and supported. A key reform that has been approved is the creation of a National Forestry Authority to succeed the Forest Department and the divestment of

forestry functions to Local Governments. These changes require substantial efforts in public relations and communication to create the necessary level of acceptability.

Towards this end, the future generation of Ugandans needs to be empowered to practice good forestry. This requires adequate individual and institutional capacities, so that the shortcomings occurring today will not continue in the future. As a consequence, there is the clear need for public education specifically targeting the youth. An education and communication programme has been launched, involving the production and distribution of the *"Tree Talk Magazine"*, along with one tonne of tree seed to be used in tree planting campaigns.

In a nutshell, there are a series of public relations and communication measures being undertaken to address different issues, which include:

- Public relations and communication for the entire sector, with specific consideration for the on-going sector reforms;
- general awareness for the new forest policy;
- organization of the National Consultative Conferences on Forestry for consultation and collaboration;
- awareness raising for the development and implementation of the national forest programme;
- publication of reports and sector documents;
- publicity in the form of calendars, posters, stickers, radio spots, press adds, TV spots, T-shirts, caps etc.;
- production of a sector wide newsletter ("Branching Out");
- development of promotional and public education programmes (with specific focus on children);

To back up the public relations and communication efforts, a number of databases have been set up and are constantly updated whenever new information becomes available or whenever the need for updating available data is identified. These databases include the following key information:

- Reports and publications dealing with sector-wide issues;
- forest reserve databases;
- database of forestry initiatives in Uganda;
- database on donors and development partners;
- databases on Forestry Department staff and assets.

These activities have jointly been sponsored by GTZ (Germany) and DFID (United Kingdom) and are managed by an information and communication officer. This officer, who is closely supervised by the Head of the Secretariat has also been funded by GTZ. In addition, consulting services have been provided by the British Forestry Commission and the German ECO-Consult.

PR Instruments Used

The public relations and communication programme described in this paper is oriented towards creating structures and processes allowing all forest stakeholders to contribute to changes and to further develop the forest sector. Once the desired changes have been initiated, it becomes easier to build capacity and make available the necessary expert knowledge from the various forest-related sciences in the country.

At the commencement of the public relations and communication programme referred to in this document, there was a need for changes in policies, staff positions and programmes of the governmental institutions, private sector companies and non-governmental organisations. In order to prepare the ground for this, there was the need for a systematic lobbying process addressing issues of public interest matters. Lobbying activities

used the available communication vehicles, media and ardent advocacy strategy approaches. Furthermore, there was the need for clearly identifying the problems, providing solutions and building support through adequate information for both the PR tools used and the contents of the messages sent out. As the prime objective, the PR and communication programme was to facilitate social change processes affecting attitudes and relationships among forest stakeholders with a focus on decentralised governance and changes in power relations among different actors. These changes include the following:

- Collaborative forest management with communities living in the vicinity of forest reserves, development of village forest reserves to secure access to resources;
- new approaches to extension service delivery, driven by stakeholder needs and improved livelihoods analysis;
- support for enhancing the relationship between government agencies: Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment and new autonomous National Forestry Authority that will replace the 100-year-old Forestry Department;
- support for a greater role of the private sector in management of forest resources;
- support for local governments to establish and manage the District Forest Services.

Communication Tools Used

1 Awareness Survey

Before resources were spent on the public relations and communication programmes as outlined above, a study was conducted in Kampala to establish the level of awareness and attitudes of stakeholders towards forestry issues. The results helped in making proper choices of the media tools to be used in our communications campaign.

In order to secure adequate resources for the communication programme the Uganda Forestry Secretariat needed to have some measure of the effectiveness of its efforts. It was therefore necessary to ascertain the level of awareness of the different stakeholders as a benchmark against which the impact of the communications programme can be measured.

The results of the study clearly indicated the need to spend more money on a future communication and public relations programme. The survey also provided the basis for changes to the existing programme that are needed to make it more effective.

2 Stakeholder Assessment

In order to have an effective and efficient public relations and communication campaign, it is necessary to identify the different stakeholders across the sector and to get them involved. An enumeration of the different stakeholders has been carried out by the District Forest Officers and the following has been identified:

- The *types of stakeholders* involved in the sector;
- *stakeholder values and views* on forest resource management problems and strategies;
- the multiple *interests and objectives of stakeholders*;
- the actual *resources, influence, authority or power that stakeholders have*;
- the *networks that stakeholders belong to* and patterns and contexts of interaction between them, be they collaborative or conflictive;
- the *distribution and social impacts of stakeholder groups* across the country; and
- the appropriate *type or degree of activity/participation of the different stakeholders*.

**Building
Coalitions**

Stakeholder assessment is particularly useful for assisting in decision-making situations where various stakeholders have competing interests, resources are limited, and yet stakeholder information and communication needs must be appropriately balanced. Stakeholder assessment helps to create a good public relations and communication environment and allows an evaluation of existing policies, laws and plans in relation to the interests of the people.

A questionnaire was designed and sent through the District Forest Officers to as many stakeholder organisations/institutions and/or individuals as possible. The completed questionnaires were returned by mail, scrutinised and analysed to give 9 different categories of stakeholders, which were further classified into:

- *Internal Stakeholders*
Internal stakeholders operate entirely within the institutional and administrative structures of the sector. In the case of the Uganda forest sector these include all the staff of the Forestry Department, the Forestry Inspection Division, and the Forestry Secretariat.
- *Interface Stakeholders*
Interface stakeholders are those who function both internally and externally in relation to sector developments. NGOs, CSOs and well-established forestry related networks like the Uganda Forest Working Group fall under this category.
- *External Stakeholders*
External stakeholders are those who provide inputs to the sector and are therefore interested in how the sector functions; examples are the global community and economic development partners.

On the basis of this grouping it was possible to design communication tools, approaches and messages that target the internal interface and external stakeholders.

**Identifying
Target
Groups**

3 “Branching Out” Newsletter

In December 2000 the “Branching Out” newsletter was launched, with an initial distribution of 700 hard copies. Following an overwhelming request from many stakeholders we considerably extended our mailing list. Today the newsletter is the most widely read forest sector newsletter in Uganda, covering general forestry issues with 1500 hard copies distributed all over the country through District Forest Officers and 300 e-mail subscribers. It stands out as an information channel for all the ongoing sector reforms including policy and legislation development processes as well as for the many different aspects of the National Forest Plan.

Fig. 1: Newsletter “Branching Out”



4 Calendars

Calendars are whole-year-round public relations and communication tools and, provided that they are of good quality, they remain visually appealing and effectively influence changes in attitude. In December 2000 two designs for calendars were made based on the “Voices of Concern” slogan – the plano calendar (5000 copies) and the corporate calendars (500 copies). The plano calendars are colourful and intended for people in the rural areas, while the corporate calendars (black and white) are used in urban areas and sent to key policy makers.

At the end of 2001, the Year 2002 plano calendars were designed and produced based on the communication slogan “Forests and

Trees – Our Future”. A similar calendar has been printed for the Year 2003, based on the slogan “*Plant, Grow and Protect Trees*”.

The impact of the calendars has been enormous. With the captions and strap lines carrying messages from different stakeholders, people are left to think about the need to adjust their ways, attitudes and actions towards forestry. This has been the motivation for an extended production of the 2003 calendar promoting a message from His Excellency the President in form of a directive urging all Ugandans to “*Plant, Protect and Grow Trees*”.

5 Web page

There have been delays in going online with the Web page and this has been an important learning experience for us. The choice of the domain name has been finalised and currently other stakeholders are contributing to the details of the Web pages. The target audience of the pages are people in academia, donors and others who may be interested in getting information about the forest sector in Uganda. We are confident and optimistic that the pages will satisfy the information needs of the various stakeholders.

The text provided on the pages is intended to convey short and clear messages, with detailed information to be accessed on the server through hyperlinks to either zipped files or portable document files (pdf). In addition, visitors will have the possibility to contact a resource person for feedback on questions raised.

6 Videos

In 2001, SusRo Production (a local firm) was commissioned to produce videos to cover pertinent issues relating to forestry and how they affect key stakeholders in the country. These videos containing information and educational material have been screened several times on the National Television as well as privately owned television stations. Copies have also been distributed to different stakeholder groups especially to those that have a public awareness and education component in their programmes, particularly non-governmental organisations and civil societies. The intention is to raise awareness and create a better understanding of the reforms that are being pursued within the sector. The videos include the following topics:

Interactive
Communi-
cation

Expert
Knowledge

- ***National Forest Programme Training***

This video contains a compilation of the proceedings of the second regional training workshop that took place in November 2000 in Kampala, organised by the Uganda Forestry Secretariat and the African Academy of Science. The stages and processes involved in the development of National Forest Programmes are explained. It has been particularly useful in getting people involved in the development and endorsement of the new Forestry Policy 2001 as well the National Forest Plan.

- ***Eradicating Poverty through Forestry***

This video elaborates the role of forestry in people's lives in Uganda and the various opportunities for improving their livelihoods. Some of the ways of improving forestry extension and support services are addressed and it gives an understanding of the livelihood assets of poor people, the importance of reducing their vulnerability to external forces that perpetuate poverty and associated institutional, policy and legal reforms that are taking place in the sector. This video, together with other means, has been a master piece in getting people to appreciate that forestry contributes a lot to the gross domestic product, particularly to the income of the people.

- ***Forests and Trees – Our Future***

Work on this video started in September 2001. The video presents activities of the Kikonge Voluntary Tree Planting Team, which is a self-propelling community-based organisation determined to restore life in Kikonge. Membership of the team is by simple commitment that you will plant and look after the trees on your farm. The home-grown ideas soon spread as more and more members joined the group after learning from successful neighbours.

These videos have significantly helped us in our PR work. The National Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture and the National Agricultural Advisory Services have also been able to use them in creating awareness. There are already other initiatives that intend to use videos in public relations and communication activities.

7 Radio Spots

Brief forestry messages have been developed, translated into local languages, produced and broadcast on radio stations. The messages are based on the aspirations and expectations of people in the field depicted in the stakeholder assessment (referred to above) that was carried out expressing concern for the future of the forestry industry, the environment and energy sources. An example of these messages is shown on the next page.

Box 1: Radio Message Expressing Concern for the Environment

Voice of Child:

Grandfather, isn't it nice that these days there are not so many trees in front of your house and you can see auntie Ida's house.

Voice of Grandfather:

No, my child we need those trees.

Voice of Child:

But why, they were just too big and bushy.

Voice of Grandfather:

My child, every living thing needs trees to survive.

Voice of Forest Sector Officer

We need trees for our well-being, our animals, improvement of soils, making money in the market and for our pensions when we grow old.

This message is brought to you by **The Forest Sector Umbrella Programme.**

WE NEED TO CARE FOR OUR TREES.

8 Bumper Stickers

One of the most interesting activities in communication efforts has been the production and distribution of bumper stickers. The process involves the choice of catch-phrases that lure people into putting the stickers on their cars. As mentioned earlier such phrases should be in line with the overall slogan for a specific communication period or year. In the year 2002 we were using the slogan *"Forests and Trees – Our Future"* and in the year 2003 *"Plant, Grow and Protect Trees"*. These slogans underline the need for forests in the future and have been translated into several languages spoken in Uganda. Up to 35,000 stickers are printed each year and distributed to the rural areas across the country through the District Forest Officers. Bicycle riders, taxi drivers and other car owners have done a good publicity job through the use of stickers. Each year, over 600 of these stickers have been distributed to Members of Parliament, in a bid to make politicians aware of our campaign.

9 Consultative Conference

The first consultative conference on Uganda's forests, held 16th - 18th September 1999, was a key event in the launching of the reform process and for the new approaches to forest management in the country. The conference was one result of a planning process that goes back to January 1997 when the *Conference of Financing Agencies and Major Non-Governmental Organisations in the Forest Sector in Uganda* recommended among others things to *"Establish a Consultative Forum that brings together key players in the Sector ..."* and to *"... establish mechanisms for regular consultation and collaboration ..."*.

The conference, which was sponsored by GTZ of Germany and DFID of U.K., was attended by 137 participants representing 67 governmental, non-governmental (NGO) and private sector organisations. The Minister of State for Environment and the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Water, Lands & Environment (MWLE), presided over the conference. All participants were brought together to ensure that there are sustainable increases in the economic and environmental benefits from forests and trees realised by the people of Uganda.

The second Consultative Conference on Uganda's Forestry was held 27th - 28th February 2002, and brought together many stake-

holders involved in Uganda's forestry sector, including government institutions, the donor community, academic institutions, the private sector, civil society, NGOs, tree growers and many interested individuals.

The standards of presentations were high. The discussions were vigorous and frank and provided a forum for serious, political debates on the forest sector. Participants left with the confidence that there is political will to mobilise the potential of the sector to bring about the necessary changes.

10 Education Programme

During the second consultative conference, a children's programme involving the printing and distribution of the Tree Talk Magazine together with Tree Seed was launched. The goal is to influence and change attitudes among children by creating awareness about tree planting. The programme communicates information on tree planting to both school-going and out-of-school children and is intended to instil good quality forestry practice among children. It is done through two editions of a magazine on trees (Tree Talk) linking tree planting with poverty alleviation, food security, and health.

The magazine is distributed to children at 17,000 primary schools, 1,600 secondary schools, 700 tertiary institutions and colleges and 700 community-based organisations (CBOs), and over 40,000 copies are included as inserts in the New Vision newspaper, Uganda's most widely read daily.

Half a tonne of tree seed packets is distributed together with the Tree Talk Magazine. Instructions on how to establish and manage a tree nursery for the different tree seeds are also included.

This programme targets school children because:

- Children are known to be particularly receptive to messages about trees and the nation's future prosperity.
- Children need to be encouraged to see forests and trees as part of their future, and as a source of income for their further education.
- Children will take this information home, and influence the attitudes of their parents and other adults.

- Schools should be encouraged to include forestry in their teaching programmes using locally collected seeds.
- Schools should see tree growing as one way of earning extra income, and to meet their own fuel and timber needs.
- Communities around each school will learn how to manage tree nurseries and raise high quality trees.

After the first round of tree seed and the Tree Talk Magazine distribution, a monitoring and evaluation exercise has been carried out in 33 districts in order to check on the progress of the exercise – the following results were obtained:

Out of the 643 schools sampled, 475 were **primary schools** accounting for 74% of the sample.

- 355 (75%) primary schools received the Tree Talk Magazine and seeds.
- 240 out of 355 (68%) started nurseries.
- A total of 15,302 seedlings were planted.
- 6,539 of these were surviving at the time of the survey.

Of the schools sampled, 168 were **secondary schools**.

- 103 (62%) of these received seeds.
- 65 of the 103 (63%) started nurseries.
- A total of 5,589 seedlings were planted.
- 2,333 of these were surviving at the time of the survey.

These results indicate a commendable success given that it was the first round of distribution. The second edition of the Tree Talk Magazine and another seed distribution took place in October

2002, and half a tonne of different seed species were distributed to all schools in the country. A third campaign is planned for February 2003.

Process of Implementing PR Instruments

The experience gained during this public relations and communication effort shows that setting schedules for implementation of communication activities is one thing and getting them done another. There have been delays caused by availability of resources, agreeing on the right way to do things, accepting views, ideas and opinion of key stakeholders and in the end fixed deadlines are not respected. However, we found it useful to split the year into quarters and get things done in certain quarters as other activities roll out (see charts below). Table 1 gives an approximate indication of the costs.

Effects of PR Measures

The success stories presented here clearly demonstrate many of the desired effects of the PR measures on attitude and public opinion:

- Broad-based participation in the development and implementation of the new Forestry Policy 2001 and the National Forest Plan (2002);
- broad-based participation in the development of new approaches in the management of the forest reserves and reform of advisory service provision and technology transfer to tree farmers;
- improved knowledge about the wise use of forests and tree resources outside the gazetted forest reserves demonstrated in forestry development pilot projects at district level;
- increased valuation of forest and trees in national development reflected in the increased budgetary allocation for forest sector development and inclusion of forestry as an indicator to measure progress towards poverty eradication;

- improved access and involvement of the poor in managing the resources through collaborative management efforts;
- stimulation of markets and small businesses for forest products; *and*
- initiation of an understanding of the need for forest sector reform that includes the transformation of the Forestry Department into a semi-autonomous body (called the National Forestry Authority) operating in a businesslike manner. This reform process also includes the decentralisation of forestry functions from the central government to local authorities.

Conclusion

Identifying and systematically applying effective public relations and communication measures is a precondition for any publicity effort to be successful. It is important that the team implementing the PR measures collaborates with key stakeholders in order to determine the most appropriate and the most effective means and messages for each communication component.

Consideration in these decisions should be based, in part, on:

- The audiences' preferred vehicle for receiving communications and information needs;
- size and geographic distribution of the audience;
- the nature and type of the communication;
- recognised communication best practices;
- organisational norms and standards;
- application of new and innovative means for effective communication;
- the frequency of application of the various PR tools.

Chart 1: Schedule of Activities, Year 2001

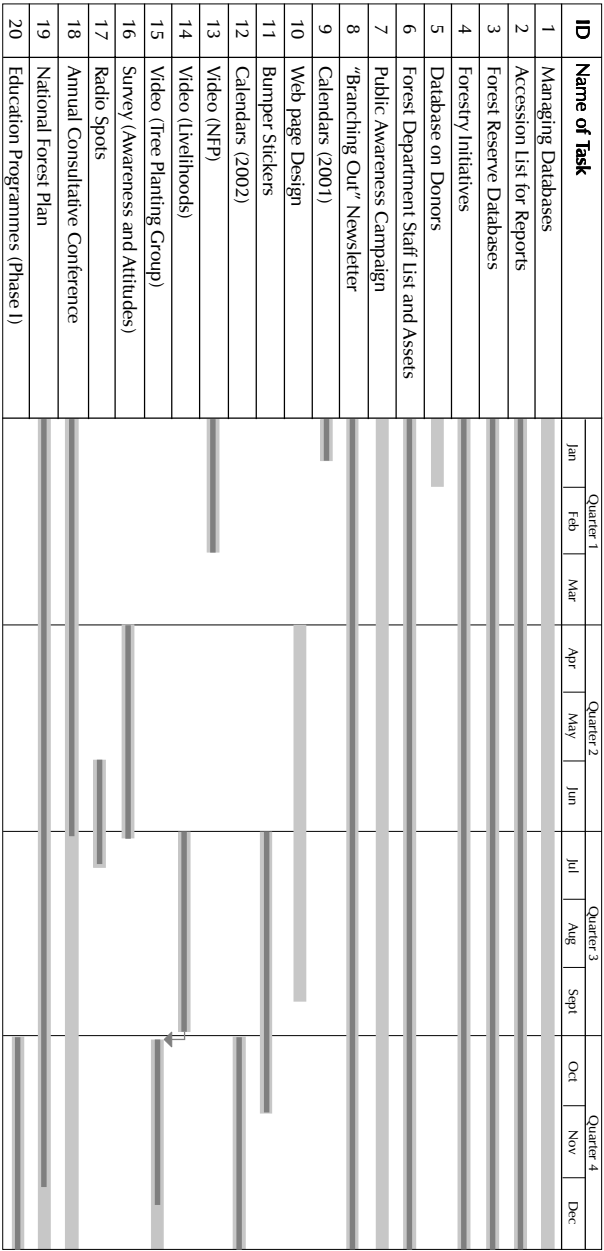


Chart 2: Schedule of Activities, Year 2002

ID	Name of Task	Jan	Feb	Mar	Quarter 2			Jun	Jul	Quarter 3			Oct	Nov	Dec
1	Managing Databases														
2	Accession List for Reports														
3	Forest Reserve Databases														
4	Forestry Initiatives														
5	Database on Donors														
6	Public Awareness Campaign														
7	"Branching Out" Newsletter														
8	Calendars (2003)														
9	Web page Design														
10	Radio Spots (with NEMA)														
11	Annual Consultative Conference														
12	National Forest Plan (Publicity)														
13	Education Programme (Phase I)														
14	Education Programme (Phase II)														
15	Launching of the Policy														
16	Launching of the Legislation														
17	Launching of the National Forest Authority														

Table 1: Approximate Annual Costs of Implementing PR Activities

Activity	Cost in USD
Awareness Survey (for 1 District)	700
Stakeholder Assessment (for 45 Districts)	11,500
"Branching Out" Newsletter (500 x 12 months)	6,000
Calendars	5,500
Web pages	5,000
3 Videos @ 1000 USD	3,000
Radio Spots (30 days, once a year)	23,000
Bumper Stickers	6,000
Consultative Conference (Once a Year)	23,000
Education Programme (per Year)	50,000
Staff: 1 (Salary for a Year)	11,000

Disseminating Research Findings of the Indicators and Tools (I-TOO) for the Management of the Secondary Forests Project in the East African Region

Gaster K. Kiyingi
Timm Tennigkeit

Period of Time: 11/2002 – 10/2005

Problem: Translate abstracts, scientific findings into target group-oriented language and formats; timely delivery of research findings to meet users needs

PR Instruments Used: Mediator based in research region; project workshops; development of project web-page; publication of findings; scientific conferences; linkage, cooperation and networks; electronic and hard copy newsletter.

Causes of Success: Partnerships with forest user groups; collaboration with forestry projects, communities as well as the private sector involved in forest management. ◀

Introduction

There are a number of public relations and communication issues to be considered if forest research is to effectively contribute to solving problems of different stakeholders, particularly of those residing in close proximity of gazetted forest reserves. This means that forest scientists need to design and implement demand-driven research and be able to communicate their findings. They need to involve research users in the research cycle starting from the initial stages of conceptualisation of a research project, draft the research proposal, carry out the research and finally apply the research results in the field.

Managing the research cycle in close cooperation with forest stakeholders has been identified as a major challenge for the European Union funded research project on "Indicators and Tools (I-TOO) for Restoration and Sustainable Management of Forests in East Africa." Major efforts in the project focus on strategies for involving stakeholders and translating abstracts and scientific findings into languages and formats appropriate to the targeted stakeholder groups.

Box 1: Key Research Items of the Project

- Prevailing closed-deciduous forest community-types and their management history;
- joint stakeholder assessment – setting the socio-economic context;
- gradient analysis – setting an ecological framework;
- modelling of economic performance of existing management approaches;
- dynamics of selected tree species;
- modelling tree populations at ecosystem level – natural & man-made systems;
- interpretation of stakeholder perceptions into management and silvicultural approaches;
- nature and management of invasive species;
- factors affecting germination & establishment of desirable tree species;
- stakeholder defined, site and degradation-specific silvicultural stand treatment and improvement interventions;

The following strategies emphasising effective and efficient communication approaches are pursued within the research framework in order to accommodate the interests of various stakeholders in the region such as local and central governments, scientific and educational institutions and local communities:

- Project specific research items (see Box 1) are being linked to the overall development goal in East Africa, mainly contributing to poverty eradication.
- Forest communities are being encouraged to manage more and more forest resources with support from the respective government agencies.
- Farmers are being encouraged to help developing new mechanisms for the articulation of demand for advisory services and adequate provision.
- The project is using a client-oriented public relations approach, addressing specific rather than general research topics. This is necessary because some of the addressed research issues are not relevant to all stakeholders.

PR Instruments

For the dissemination of the results of the I-TOO project the following instruments are applied:

1 Project Flyer

Partners in the project have been responsible for good public relations work during field research, i.e., forest stakeholders should be informed about the objective of the study and the benefits end-users can derive from the results. An electronic project flyer has been designed and distributed among partners to serve this purpose. Hardcopies of the same have also been made available.

Fig. 1: Partners in the ITOO-Project



The major impact of this effort is that the flyer has continuously reminded partners of their role and responsibility to communicate:

- the project objectives;
- the work packages that need to be accomplished by each partner;
- the need for dissemination of research findings;
- the need to share information especially among research partners;
- snappy dissemination materials, ease-to-read language and written style to be clear and unambiguous.

2 Project Workshops

Project workshops are used as a means of consultation among partners and as a means of sharing progress and experience on the different research items. The first project workshop aimed at inaugurating the project and was held from 10th to 13th March, 2002, at Nyabeya Forestry College Masindi, Uganda. All research partners were in attendance.

The workshop benefited the participants in terms of:

- Building confidence amongst the research partners and getting to know one another;
- clarification on research tasks, ongoing research activities and practical results that can be adopted by the forest user;
- knowing the administrative component of the research project;
- clarification on the necessity to integrate research findings with regional government policies on poverty eradication, modernization of agriculture and education and training.

The second project workshop took place in Morogoro, Tanzania, in January, 2003, and had the following objectives:

- To share new perspectives and progress of the research conducted in Ethiopia on population dynamics, model development and silvicultural management tools for forest dweller associations in Ethiopia;
- to share work progress on research in Uganda on ecological gradient study and the silvicultural potential assessment;
- to exchange views on public relations and communication strategies in order to improve research results dissemination.

Subsequent meetings will involve different users of the research results in order to share experiences and discuss the adoption of the research results.

3 Development of Project Web Page

The basic concept for a project homepage has been developed. The Internet site which is hosted at the Institute of Silviculture

of the University of Freiburg, Germany, can be accessed at:
<http://www.waldbau.uni-freiburg.de/ITOO/>.

Fig. 2: The Homepage of the I-TOO Project



The homepage contains a set of sub-sites, intended to cover all products of the project and information about the activities and progress of each partner.

The Web page is designed to provide information about the I-TOO project and enables researchers to download available research outputs. As an additional service links to reliable and available sources of online information on forestry sciences and research in the East African region are provided.

4 Research Mediator

The research mediator takes on the responsibility of coordinating and managing all public relations and communication activities of the project. He is responsible for translation and publishing of scientific findings in languages and forms suitable to reach end users, such as CBOs, NGOs and policy makers. Project workshops and the project Web page on the Internet represent key elements of this approach.

In serving as a communication hub for the project the research mediator carries out the following activities:

- Provideing public relations, communication and dissemination assistance to I-TOO partners;
- translateing and publishing of scientific findings into languages and forms suitable to reach end users;
- coordinating the entire communication programme of the I-TOO project using different tools that suit different information users.

The mediator approach is probably one of the most innovative elements of the I-TOO project. All I-TOO partners closely cooperate with the mediator and discuss how to communicate research ideas and results to different stakeholders.

5 Publication of Findings

It is targeted that research findings of the project are published and reviewed in journals. So far, a number of publications and write-ups have been made which provide the basis for developing silvicultural manuals of selected tree species in the region.

6 Dissemination of Results through Linkages, Cooperation and Strategic Partnerships

The research approach on forest ecosystem restoration and sustainable management pursued by the project is end-user driven. Research objectives and approaches are determined by the demands and requirements of the stakeholders involved. In order to better achieve the objectives, the I-TOO Project established partnerships with different stakeholders such as community based organisations, private forest industry, non-governmental and governmental organisations. Within the first year of project implementation, the following arrangements towards the establishment of partnerships have been made:

a) Partnership with Regional Programmes

Agroforestry Research Network for Africa (AFRENA), World Agroforestry Centre:

I-TOO collaborated with the Multispecies Programme of AFRENA in Bwindi National Park, Uganda. The findings of the I-TOO study on the restoration potential of *Podocarpus* will be used by the AFRENA project to develop and disseminate multispecies agroforestry guidelines. A similar collaboration has been initiated

on *Miosopsis eminii*, a widely used agroforestry tree in the region.

b) Partnerships with National Initiatives

Integrated Forest Management Project (IFMP) in Adaba-Dodola, Ethiopia, supported by German Technical Cooperation:

The IFMP is probably the most advanced approach to introduce community forest management in Ethiopia. So far the approach is accepted as a pilot project at the provincial government level. I-TOO is collaborating with the project on forest dweller based silvicultural management tools. Within this collaboration a member of the IFMP senior staff is involved in a PhD thesis research supervised by the Freiburg University.

Forest Resources Management and Conservation Programme Uganda (FRMCP), supported by the European Development Fund:

The I-TOO project has established a close partnership with the FRMCP. The FRMCP has conducted a very detailed inventory for many forest reserves and compartments of the Budongo Forest, one of the best researched and most threatened forest ecosystems in East Africa. Through the collaboration with I-TOO the project is in a position to make use of the available information. First study results conducted by I-TOO revealed a shift in species composition and identified indicators for potential silvicultural interventions.

Uganda Forest Sector Coordination Secretariat (UFSCS) supported by DfID:

The I-TOO project has established links with the UFSCS and learned from their success in promotion, public education and communication. The I-TOO project has also benefited from a wide collection of literature on forest ecosystems in Uganda. The UFSCS has well established networks with different stakeholders in the region, which has always been referred to by I-TOO project. The I-TOO project has been publicized in the "Branching Out" newsletter, published by the Secretariat.

Kilombero Valley Teak Company Ltd, Tanzania (KVTC):

The I-TOO project has visited and established first contacts to the biggest private forest investor in East Africa. KVTC has the most advanced management system and is considering international forestry standards (ISO 14000). While the project focus is on plantation forestry, KVTC recently decided to establish an improved Miombo Woodland management programme. The

research cooperation with I-TOO will therefore greatly contribute to this programme.

7 Electronic Newsletter

An e-newsletter has been developed by the project with the intention of improving communication and exchange of information relevant to restoration and sustainable management of forests in the East African region, particularly in Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia. It is also intended to provide information and facilitate communication among researchers and policy makers in East Africa, and in particular among those involved or interested in the activities of the I-TOO programme. Issue 1, of August 2002 (see illustration above), covered issues on the I-TOO project, the I-TOO communication strategy, the conference on restoration and management of degraded/secondary forests; and the summer course at the University of Freiburg. Subsequent issues of the newsletter cover different aspects of the I-TOO research project.

Fig. 3: E-Newsletter “I-TOO News”



Public Relations and Communication Process

In order to have in place an efficient public relations and communication system and hence an effective research dissemination approach, the following factors were considered by the I-TOO project as being vital:

- *Identification of information users – Who are they and where are they found?*

**Identifying
Target
Groups**

- *Information needs assessment* –
What information do they need?
- *Information sources* –
Competence and trustworthy;
is the information reliable?
- *Information contents* –
Clear and unambiguous;
is the information comprehensible?
- *Information dissemination medium* –
That can be accessed by users and is
comprehensible.

A closer look at the barriers to effective communication and information dissemination was also necessary in order to avoid mistakes. Common barriers include:

- Project priorities – to make sure that research results are not only used internally but are effectively disseminated.
- Practical difficulties – disincentives to researchers in terms of reduced budgets for dissemination and time constraint.
- Infrastructural barriers – technical barriers, limiting access to information by users e.g. access to Internet, social and cultural barriers, language and jargon.

Effects of the PR Measures

There has no comprehensive monitoring and evaluation process been applied to find out how effective each PR tool has been. However, anecdotal evidence suggests the following positive impacts of the research dissemination strategy of the I-TOO project:

- Ideas have been generated on stakeholder coordination frameworks so as to facilitate communication and information exchange;

- stakeholder expectations and aspirations (information needs) have been assessed;
- organisational structures and management strategies of the different stakeholders institutions and/or organisations are documented;
- information on stakeholder attitudes, views and values relating to secondary forests have been gathered;
- forest management practices, characteristics and the applied silvicultural practices are known;
- the distribution of forest research dissemination efforts in the region is now known with indications of costs and benefits; *and*
- the power and influence of stakeholders which gives an indication of why things are the way they are, and what needs to be changed, is also clear.

On the basis of that, a communication strategy has been adopted to redirect research dissemination with a dynamically functional, rationally positive, centrally motivated internal participation from research partners. Among the tools thought about, we have e-mails, communication to and with established networks, workshops, working documents, research report, Web page, journals, and face-to-face verbal means.

Conclusion

From our experience, it has been found that the establishment of a research group involving eight groups of research partners – four from three East African and four from three European countries has been difficult and hard to achieve within the framework of a project life span of four years.

Our communication efforts have been mauled “poor” internal communication and sharing of information, with partners preferring to do “their own things”. Most of the initial public relations and communication work has been the effort of the mediator and the project coordinator, with little support from research partners. That being the case, the following aspects have been identified for further learning:

- 1** First and foremost the targeted audience must be identified.
- 2** It is important to get an understanding of the type of audience who are the recipients of the information to be disseminated. This gives an indication of the ways in which the targeted audience receives the information. Decisions about appropriate dissemination pathways must be informed about users, source, contents and the communication vehicle being used.
Therefore, in order to ensure the widest possible dissemination, a variety of dissemination pathways including traditional, face-to-face, use of communication technology need be used in order to cover a range of user needs.
- 3** It is important to identify and assess research users' information needs and this usually depends on the status of the different stakeholders and their respective roles and responsibilities.
- 4** There is a need for a clear rationale for dissemination and how it relates to research objectives. Usually it is important to avoid contradictions and controversial issues in research dissemination.
- 5** Adequate funding during and beyond the project life span is crucial to the project's success. Quite often research budgets only include the dissemination of information during the research process and of the initial implementation stage leaving no funds for dissemination beyond the research project.
- 6** There is a need for careful planning of the timing of information dissemination in order to maximise impact. For example, the release of different types of information in the form of interim reports at various stages of the project cycle is more useful compared to an end of year project document. Such a document may not be comprehensible to first-time readers.
- 7** For every work done in public relations and communication, there is a need to monitor and evaluate the impact.

PR Tools Advance Urban Forestry and Tree Education

Clayton G. Hodge
Lynn M. Davis

Period of Time: 1999 –

Problem: To make citizens of Virginia U.S.A. more aware of the value of urban forestry and how to care for urban trees.

PR Instruments Used: Web page; newsletter; workshops; conferences; print mail; media releases; news coverage of tree plantings; and the cooperative relationship with the College of Natural Resources at Virginia Tech in creating a new urban forestry program.

Causes of Success: Grouping interests; building coalitions, identifying target groups; communication with multipliers; using multiple PR instruments and combining them; participative communication at workshops. ◀

Urban Forestry Problems, Education, and Solutions

Urban forestry is a discipline that brings together elements of forestry, horticulture, arboriculture, landscape architecture, and land use planning to manage or establish trees, forest ecosystems and/or open green space in urban and community settings. A problem facing many communities in Virginia is how to make citizens more aware of the value of urban forestry so that they will be good tree stewards. This case study outlines the cooperative Public Relations (PR) efforts to address the problem.

The development and expansion of communities has more often than not caused unplanned urban sprawl, as inevitable population growth pushes the need for more land space. Natural spaces that were once void of development disappear unless efforts are made to maintain, preserve, or replace them.

Urban sprawl and other human encroachments can be damaging to natural ecosystems and nature's ability to offset changes. Air, soil, and water quality can be compromised. Wildlife habitats and ecosystems can be destroyed. Since some living conveniences require permanent encroachments upon the natural environment, sound decisions need to be made in advance to mitigate damage. Developers of land that use sound planning techniques can design buildings, communities, and infrastructure to do just that.

Richard Foster and his company, Baymark Construction Corporation, located on Virginia's Eastern Shore, exemplifies a person and company dedicated to maintaining and preserving the natural environment while meeting the needs of citizens. Foster, with over 40 years of experience in the construction business, says, "Old growth trees, open water, and wetlands are precious resources that add so much to everyone's quality of life. My personal goal in every development has been to preserve the natural features of the land upon which we build for residents and future generations to enjoy."

Environmental benefits of urban forestry include reduction of noise levels, creation of buffer zones, improving storm water quality and reducing runoff, improvements in water quality, creation and maintenance of wildlife habitats, decrease in soil erosion, and improvements in air quality.

Soil erosion in communities can be reduced through urban forestry practices such as the planting of trees to stabilize the soil. Air quality in densely populated areas may be affected by concentrated emissions from fossil fuel use. Planting more trees helps restore good air quality by absorbing air pollutants.

Economic benefits of urban forestry practices in communities include decreased energy costs, increased property values, enhancement of business districts, and attraction of economic development. Trees, vegetation, and landscaping can be incorporated into plans for homeowners and businesses that will help reduce heating and cooling energy costs by acting as wind barriers, shade, and heat absorbers.

Urban forestry practices offer social benefits to citizens and communities, which are sometimes more difficult to quantify.

Such benefits include positive impact on consumer behavior, increase in recreational opportunities, and improvement in health and well-being. These values are called the social dimensions of urban forestry.

Urban forestry is different than many specialties because it addresses multiple aspects and concerns to mitigate impacts. For example, urban forestry integrates land use planning, which involves considerable networking to accomplish on-the-ground results. Urban forestry's social component can be greater than other fields because of the large number of non-profit organizations and volunteers that can be involved.

Addressing a specific need or problem of a specialty within a community while not considering other impacts can create imbalances. As an example, suppose certain trees and vegetation that offer a natural food source are planted near major highways or in a community. Although the act may meet aesthetic needs and fulfill certain forestry, landscaping, horticultural, or other needs, it can create havoc for the community because wildlife are attracted to food sources. A new problem may arise in how to control the unwanted encroachments by wildlife such as deer, which may cause highway accidents or eat the communities' prized plants.

In the past, not having sustained leadership and a consensus across the state in urban forestry issues and needs has hindered the distribution of consistent urban forestry information to citizens and communities, legislators, and community leaders. The previous lack of support in state government and even within the Virginia's Department of Forestry (VDOF) has given way to present-day support and acknowledgement of the values of urban forestry. Organizations such as the Virginia Cooperative Extension, landscaping architecture programs, and other groups have assisted Virginians as best they could in the past. By not having an exclusive Virginia organization serving as a central source of information, the problem was not being addressed in a comprehensive and consistent manner.

Trees Virginia, legally incorporated as the Virginia Urban Forestry Council, was created to address such concerns and serve as an informational resource for citizens, planners, and other interested groups. The public name, Trees Virginia, was recently

adopted in a PR strategy to better market its mission. The organization was created to represent a cross-section of organizations that have interests in trees and urban forestry.

**Definition
of Identity**

Trees Virginia was founded in 1990 as a result of the federal "America The Beautiful" Program, now called the "Urban and Community Forestry Program", which was established by the U.S. Congress' Farm Bill. In 1991, Trees Virginia was incorporated as a non-profit organization. The mission of Trees Virginia is to enhance the quality of life through stewardship of Virginia's urban and community trees by educating the citizens as to the values of urban forestry and how to care for trees.

**Building
Coalitions**

Trees Virginia is governed by a board of directors composed of 21 volunteer Virginia representatives from academia, municipalities, government, and industries that have a vested interest in urban forestry and tree care. Issues and needs are discussed among board members, prioritized, and action items agreed upon at bi-monthly board meetings. The organization employs an executive director, assistants, and interns as needed and when funding permits.

Trees Virginia receives funding mainly through the VDOF's competitive grant application process. The department administers block grants from federal agencies such as the USDA Forest Service for urban and community forestry initiatives and funnels funds to organizations throughout the state. Financial support also comes from organizations such as the National Tree Trust and such businesses as Bartlett Tree Experts, local nurseries, and developer Richard Foster.

Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources is one of the leading partners in Trees Virginia. Gregory Brown, dean of the college, was instrumental through his leadership and support in helping found the organization, and is a permanent member of the board of directors. Lynn Davis, director of public affairs for the college, also serves on the board, along with assistant professor Brian Kane, who directs the new urban forestry studies at Virginia Tech.

The VDOF, with Paul Revell serving as the state's urban forestry coordinator, is another key partner of Trees Virginia. The state forester, James Garner, and the urban forestry coordinator serve

as permanent board members of the organization. Trees Virginia has its headquarters at VDOF's centrally located headquarters in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Trees Virginia cooperates with numerous local, regional, state, and national groups; various non-profit groups; and community colleges that share common interests, and participates in some of their various projects. Such groups include the Virginia Forestry Association (VFA), which also provides some publicity and support; Tree City USA staff in towns across the state; local urban forestry groups; master gardeners; city horticulturists; and educators. Trees Virginia can offer groups informational resources and assistance, and sometimes financial assistance for particular projects such as scholarships to national conferences, scholarships to underrepresented student groups in the field of forestry, sponsorships for such events as Tour de Trees bike ride, and for tree planting projects.

***Building
Coalitions***

Trees Virginia uses multiple PR instruments to address problems in educating Virginians about urban forestry and tree care. Motivations for using PR instruments include: getting better information to citizens, identifying and addressing issues, targeting appropriate audiences, attracting interested groups and potential leaders/teachers, getting organizations involved in pertinent issues, attracting public and private support, and supporting urban forestry education at Virginia Tech.

***Identifying
Target
Groups***

Providing better quality information enables citizens and communities to make better decisions. Information on issues of concern may range from Virginia's urban tree decline to funding for projects. Using effective PR instruments to address issues is crucial in mitigating harmful forestry practices.

As an example, "Experts Agree, Don't Top Your Tree" is a major campaign by Trees Virginia aimed at abating wide scale ignorance of topping trees rather than pruning them. The PR blitz, originally developed in Missouri, was revised to fit the needs of Trees Virginia's campaign. Tree topping mutilates trees and can be harmful or deadly to the trees, but yet many people continue the practice rather than having trees pruned.

Although the misguided practice may have started through ignorance, tree topping can kill trees, lower property values, and

be costly to citizens. Pruning trees retains their natural shape and beauty, and helps insure that trees will continue to be strong and healthy. Trees Virginia, through a major distribution of printed material (press packets) to Virginia media outlets and organizations is trying to reverse the practice of topping trees through education and awareness.

By getting more groups involved and familiar with urban forestry issues and trees, Trees Virginia hopes to further its mission. Partnering with Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources, Trees Virginia and its members, many of whom are employers of skilled urban foresters, can benefit from the new urban forestry studies program being offered to undergraduate students. The program can help organizations recruit qualified employees and provides students with a background that can help promote the mission of Trees Virginia in the workplace.

PR Instruments Used

PR instruments used to advance urban forestry include the web site, newsletter, workshops, conferences, print material, media releases, news coverage of tree plantings, training of tree stewards, and Trees Virginia's networking with other organizations. The cooperative spirit between Trees Virginia and Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources helped create the urban forestry program that's now available to students.

Trees Virginia maintains a Web presence at

► <http://www.treesvirginia.org>

with universal access and pertinent links that offer resources to the public, with minimal cost to the organization. With e-mail, citizens can easily contact the organization through the site with little expense.

Trees Virginia produces a quarterly newsletter to stay in regular communication with members and supporters. Newsletters are also distributed at workshops and conferences to broaden its outreach.

Trees Virginia uses workshops to offer participants hands-on learning experience on various topics for a nominal fee. Tree planting and tree care workshops are highly successful. Recent workshops in Roanoke and Waynesboro, Virginia, were well attended.

Conferences featuring speakers who are specialists in their field are another effective tool. Conferences offer similar benefits as workshops but they are longer in duration, generally more expensive, have greater attendance, and offer less hands-on experience. Because conferences normally involve more resources and time for both attendees and participants, they are often sponsored by partnering groups. For some conferences, Trees Virginia offers scholarships, which are funded through the USDA Forest Service.

An important PR instrument used by Trees Virginia is the "Experts Agree, Don't Top Your Tree" press packet campaign. Since Trees Virginia operates on a relatively small budget, mass-mailing information directly to citizens is prohibitively costly. The print material for the media campaign, although ultimately aimed at educating citizens, was sent to news outlets to help educate the masses about the negative effects of topping trees versus pruning. The media can use the information directly through public service announcements or they can include portions in future news stories and articles. Trees Virginia used this PR instrument because it offered the least costly opportunity to educate Virginia's media organizations and leverage its input in educating citizens.

Media releases are helpful PR instruments for announcing events such as workshops and conferences, and immediate information that Trees Virginia feels citizens may need. When releases are sent to media outlets and organizations, the information may appear in local, regional, and national publications. The information may appear in such publications as Virginia Forests, a magazine produced by the VFA. Similarly, it may be used by the American Forests organization, which provides extensive support and resources to tree-related groups, and which conducts its own broad-based national media program. Trees Virginia uses media releases because they are flexible and can be specifically targeted to specific needs or geographical locations.

Although the development of the urban forestry studies in Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources may not be a traditional PR instrument, it is a valuable tool for Trees Virginia's mission. What one group does to advance the mission, the other group often benefits.

Trees Virginia supported the creation of the urban forestry studies program at Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources. The option within the forestry major was designed to provide Bachelor of Science graduates with the education and training necessary for entry-level professional positions in urban forest management. Graduates of the program are fully qualified professional foresters, who may help fill the recruitment needs of tree-care businesses, municipalities, and governments. Career opportunities are wide open because every city in America is hiring urban foresters.

Trees Virginia has created the Richard S. Foster Urban Forestry Scholarship at Virginia Tech, which when fully endowed will provide scholarships to urban forestry students. The scholarship honors Mr. Foster's innovative approach to community development and his commitment to urban forestry. The college sent out media releases to publicize the new urban forestry study program and scholarship.

Process of Implementing PR Instruments

The limitation of funds and labor often dictate what PR instruments are used. The web site, newsletters, workshops, conferences, print material, media releases, and the organization's cooperation with organizations such as Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources, were economical means to meet the organization's needs.

The Trees Virginia web site debuted in 1997, is constantly updated, and is being re-designed to a higher level. The site took about four months to develop; the labor was provided through volunteers and one paid contractor. The site's hosting cost is about USD 250 a year, with maintenance cost minimal because volunteers do the updates.

The Trees Virginia newsletter, *Trees Virginia*, is published four times a year. The board members write the articles. In current lean budget times, the newsletter has been simplified, runs reduced, and costs cut to USD 500 an issue.

Trees Virginia offers and participates in numerous workshops each year. In 2001, workshops included the Tree City Workshop held in Marion, Virginia, where three board members made presentations to 20 participants from five southwestern Virginia locations. Another workshop involving Trees Virginia in the same year was the Tree Steward Reunion and Workshop held in Front Royal, Virginia, which had 25 participants. The Plant Health Care Workshop in Waynesboro, Virginia, in which Trees Virginia was involved, drew 100 participants. Another workshop, Building with Trees Workshop, in Manassas, Virginia, had 101 participants.

Participants in workshops usually pay fees of approximately USD 45 - USD 85, and workshops usually last a day or less. Often meals and materials may be included. Leaders of workshops may be reimbursed for their expenses through Trees Virginia and/or other hosting organizations. If Trees Virginia is the sole host, it may or may not recoup all cost involved. If participants' fees do not cover total cost, Trees Virginia absorbs the loss. If fees are more than the total cost, Trees Virginia will use the surplus for other projects or seed money for the next workshop. In the fall 2002 workshop, Trees Virginia had about 195 participants, who paid about USD 70 to attend. A grant enabled Trees Virginia to realize a surplus of USD 5,000.

Trees Virginia participates in larger conferences in various ways. For instance, in 2001, the organization participated in the National Urban Forest Conference in Washington, D.C. Trees Virginia and other organizations offered exhibits. Trees Virginia handled registration fees, exhibit fees, and travel scholarships for 33 people. Five of Trees Virginia's board members attended. Some participants and speakers came from other countries.

Trees Virginia's board members, in planning their program of work each year, pinpoint the conferences to host or attend. Generally, individual board members work within their own hiring organizations to have the time off and to get the registration fees needed to participate in conferences. The cost for

attending a large conference can range from USD 100 to USD 1,000; Trees Virginia's conferences range from free to USD 125.

The "Experts Agree, Don't Top Your Tree" campaign involved printing and assembling 500 press packets in 2001. Each packet contained camera-ready artwork, press releases, informational articles, a brochure, and a poster. The bulk of the packets were distributed in 2001 to 289 media outlets. Most of the remaining packets have since been distributed to organizations as needed. Once the Trees Virginia's board of directors agreed on the project in 2001, it took approximately six months to get the material designed, printed, assembled, and distributed. Part-time executive director at the time, Kathy Sevebeck worked on the project. The printing cost for all packets and the bulk distribution was approximately USD 1,800. The labor cost totaled USD 4,000.

Trees Virginia produces media releases as events warrant. They are sent to the targeted media list that will best serve the need. When an executive director is on board, that person handles the releases; board members are currently sending out the releases with review by the president since budget cuts presently cannot fund an executive director. The release is sent by e-mail, regular mail, or a combination, or it can be included with other mailings.

In 2001, Trees Virginia sent a media release to 78 organizations to announce the Tree City USA awards; congratulation letters were sent to each of the mayors of 38 localities. As another example, Trees Virginia's media release on the urban forestry scholarship was sent out in December 2002 by Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources.

The cooperation between Trees Virginia and Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources that has helped develop the urban forestry study program was a long-term and unique undertaking. Trees Virginia helped show the need for such a program so that a new faculty member could be employed.

After university approvals came, a part time instructor was employed in 2001 and then a full time assistant professor hired in 2002 to teach the urban forestry classes. Current enrollment in the new program is six; other majors can take the urban forestry courses as electives.

Trees Virginia, having supported the creation of the urban forestry study program from the beginning, helped acquire scholarship assistance for students in the program. It started the Richard S. Foster Urban Forestry Scholarship, which needs a minimum of USD 25,000 for endowment. Once endowed, a minimum of USD 1,000 in scholarship support each year will be available to urban forestry students. In 2001, the Trees Virginia's board of directors assigned USD 5,750 for the first contribution to the scholarship, which is expected to be fully endowed in a couple of years.

Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources has used media releases to inform the public about the new urban forestry program, the new faculty appointment, and the creation of the scholarship. The news is also included in the college's yearly news magazine, which is distributed to over 5,000 recipients, including alumni, current students' parents, and numerous other supporters.

How Effects of PR Instruments Can Be Measured

The detailed effects of certain PR instruments used by Trees Virginia to address the problem of educating Virginians about urban forestry is difficult to quantify directly, either individually or as a whole since overlapping occurs. Some indicators, however, include web site access data, newsletter and membership numbers, number of workshops and attendance, attendance at conferences, accounts of media awareness, general feedback and requests to Trees Virginia, and student enrollment numbers in the urban forestry program at Virginia Tech.

Whenever the web site is advertised through other PR instruments such as newsletters and media releases, site traffic substantially increases. The site began with about 40 hits per month and now gets about 85 per month, which shows solid growth.

The number of newsletters used by Trees Virginia was greater in its early years when the organization was more of a membership-based group. In recent years, both those numbers have dropped as the organization evolved into more of a steering group and less of a membership group. The next PR challenge



*Give Them
a Reason
to Talk
about
Themselves*

of Trees Virginia is whether to rebuild a large membership or continue with its smaller core base.

Some members may view the newsletter as a benefit of membership and with other reasons, it may further entice them to join. Membership is currently approximately 470 members. The newsletters have given timely and helpful information to its recipients, who are key players in Virginia's urban forestry arena. If indicators such as impacts on workshop attendance are considered, the PR instrument has been highly successful.

The number of workshops that Trees Virginia offers varies each year and in number of participants, but generally, the numbers have all increased because of their popularity with the target audiences. The fact that so many people attend suggests that a combination of other PR instruments used to announce the events, may be successful. Those attending are 'seeds' for change in their communities, which is why conferences could also be evaluated as successful PR tools.

Trees Virginia's "Experts Agree, Don't Top Your Tree" print campaign has been an effective start in battling the widespread ignorance of topping trees. Due to the large number of press packets sent to media outlets, it is difficult to monitor each outlet's use of the material. The budget did not allow the purchase of a press clipping service. Trees Virginia and Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources, however, have maintained excellent media relationships with many media outlets, and in the past, information given to the news media has often been used in some fashion. The general consensus is that the campaign has made a difference – folks are more knowledgeable about the harm of topping trees and that pruning is the healthy practice. Calls, inquiries, and feedback to Trees Virginia are other indicators that the tree pruning campaign has been a successful wake-up call.

The number of students enrolled in the urban forestry program at Virginia Tech is also an indicator for measuring the success of PR instruments. Enrollment has grown to six students and is expected to increase in coming years because the job market for urban foresters is wide open.

Other aspects to consider in how PR instruments have had an impact in urban forestry education are the increasing number and quality of Virginia urban and community forestry grant proposals, proliferation of new local non-profit tree organizations such as Tree Stewards, and new programs being developed at community college levels such as Blue Ridge Community College. The state's financial support for urban and community forestry initiatives such as tree planting grants were progressive until the state budget crisis of 2002. These initiatives can involve many players, including advocates and opponents of a particular initiative. Urban and community forestry values can now be quantified by models such as the City Green program, a Trees Virginia supported study in Roanoke, Virginia; these models have great PR value and can be used as a tool to inform policy makers.

Conclusion

With any new emerging field like urban forestry, educating citizens about the value of urban forestry can be a challenge. Urban forestry offers opportunities to balance the needs of citizens and communities with the need to maintain and protect their green infrastructure and natural environment. The field addresses impacts to nature while meeting population needs, with specific focus on the tree canopy.

Previously, urban forestry and tree care education faced several obstacles in Virginia, including citizens not having general knowledge on urban forestry issues, needs, and information. Some of the information out there was wrong. Groups that shared common interests lacked a link that could foster cooperation.

To help urban forestry education spread and produce effective results, a new organization – Trees Virginia – was formed through cooperatives efforts with Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources and other interested groups. Cooperative relationships have helped develop the much-needed synergy for Trees Virginia to fulfill its mission to educate citizens about urban forestry and promote good tree care. Through cooperation and by using PR instruments to better deliver the message, Trees Virginia has leveraged its strength and effectiveness.

PR instruments such as the web site, newsletter, workshops, conferences, print material, media releases, and partnerships have been used successfully by Trees Virginia. Its web site is expected to see increased traffic as more information is added and the site is upgraded. Membership and corresponding newsletters are on a plateau; membership issues are currently being addressed. Workshops are very popular and demand is increasing. General interest in urban forestry is spreading. The anti-tree topping campaign has been a successful awareness exercise to educate the media and encourage "tree toppers" to become tree pruners. Media releases have been successful in announcing events and information. The urban forestry study program at Virginia Tech demonstrates that cooperation can promote urban forestry education.

Trees Virginia, although still in its infancy, has been successful in its mission thus far. Projects are ongoing as the organization strives to develop ongoing cooperative relationships. Difficult as it may be to directly measure PR effectiveness, PR instruments have undoubtedly played a crucial role in informing citizens about the organization, its work, and good urban forestry practices.

Web Sites for Additional Information

- Richard Foster –
http://www.bay-creek.com/pres_letter.html

Virginia Department of Forestry –
<http://www.state.vipnet.org/dof/>

Virginia Cooperative Extension –
<http://www.ext.vt.edu/>

Trees Virginia –
<http://www.treesvirginia.org/>

National Tree Trust –
<http://www.nationaltreetrust.org/>

Bartlett Tree Experts –
<http://www.bartlett.com/>

Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources –
<http://www.cnr.vt.edu/>

Virginia Forestry Association –
<http://www.vaforestry.org/>

Tree City USA –
<http://www.arborday.org/programs/treeCityUSA.html>

Virginia Forests –
<http://www.vaforestry.org/Images/vfapub.htm>

American Forests –
<http://www.americanforests.org/>

Tree Stewards –
<http://www.fw.vt.edu/vufc/treesteward/treestewards.html>

Blue Ridge Community College –
<http://www.br.cc.va.us/arboriculture/index.html>

Science Information about Forests for Broad Audiences

Cynthia L. Miner

Period of Time: 1998 – 2003

Problem: The demand for scientific information has increased to include a broader range of people than in the past; scientific information is hardly understandable.

PR Instruments Used: Two publications were developed to reach people who make and influence decisions about land management. One is science-driven and delivered monthly to a broad audience of 10,000 people. The other is issue-driven and delivered to targeted audience about every three months.

Causes of Success: PR has been given high priority; identification of target groups; communicating to multipliers; providing confidence in forest science; participative publication process. ◀

Introduction

Public interest in forest-related issues is strong in the Pacific Northwest. Historically, timber industry has played a prominent role in the economy of the region. Environmental issues are of strong interest to the public and are reflected in innovative forest practice and land use planning laws in the states of Oregon and Washington.

The Pacific Northwest Research Station, USDA Forest Service, is a leader in the region for providing scientific information about forests including biophysical, economic, and social aspects in Alaska, Oregon, and Washington. For example, its scientists conducted the original studies on the northern spotted owl and continue to monitor this species and the marbled murrelet, both at the centre of recent controversy. The Station played a key role in the development of the Northwest Forest Plan intended to provide a forest management solution that would yield predictable

volume and enhance the protection of these and other old-growth associated species

As a result of its role in highly contentious public policy issues, the Pacific Northwest Research Station has become known among various interest groups who seek its scientific information. The role of science information in general became a significant rallying point from all sides during the past decade.

The Pacific Northwest Research Station is regarded as a credible source of information. This is the key factor in their decision to use information generated by the Station. Demand for the Station's scientific and technical publications has expanded from resource managers and other scientist to include public policy makers, non-governmental organizations, and citizens active in management decisions. People who request publications included staffers from Congress, judges, lawyers, bankers, financial investors, reporters, and teachers. In the mid-1990s, workshops with the Station's clients, customer service surveys by Forest Service Research and Development, and discussions with individuals who request Station publications revealed that people were very eager to understand the scientific information being developed but that they were unsatisfied with current products because they were difficult to read and not readily accessible.

In 1996, a strategy was developed to reorganize resources toward development and delivery of communication products. The strategy proposed to expand publications from mostly technical and scientific publications to include packages of products for non-technical audiences. In 1997, this audience was defined as people who make or influence decisions about land management. Now, the problem was how to reach this newly defined audience with complex scientific information that they would be willing to read and do it in a way that could help them use the information in making or influencing decisions. The station had capacity to publish scientific information. Could it expand this capacity to publish this information in a different way?

Identifying
Target
Groups

PR Instruments Used

A publication was developed to feature scientific findings that had clear implications for management of forestland. The publi-

cation was named “Science Findings.” An issue would be published each month to improve its profile among readers as a source of credible and understandable information. With this series, the Station would begin to adequately communicate key findings from the hundreds of findings it produced annually. The publication needed to reach key decision makers and people who influence those decisions in Alaska, Washington, and Oregon of the United States. The publication was conceptualised by the station director and communication leader. This link between communication expertise and executive leadership was key to adequate investment and success.

*High
Priority
of Public
Relations*

A desire for credible scientific information was expected to be the primary reason people would read the publication. The scientific work needed to have been peer reviewed prior to appearing in the series. The information needed to be set within the context of issues. Language needed to reflect an audience with a bachelor’s degree but not necessarily one related to forests. A high level of interest in forest-related issues would be assumed. The writing style would be inviting, somewhat conversational, intelligent, and easy-to-read by the intended audience.

The publication needed to be short enough to not overwhelm but long enough to adequately explain the findings and their significance. The reader was to be able to pick up the publication and either skim it for key information in less than 5 minutes or read the entire publication within 20 minutes. A 6-page format was selected with a summary and two sets of key bullets: key findings and land management implications. Photos and figures were to appear on each page spread. A profile of the scientist and photo would be included with references for further reading. A list of collaborators who helped with the research needed to be acknowledged.

The publication was developed and the first issue published in February 1998. A mailing list was developed from key contacts the station had already established, mailing lists for the station’s publication catalogue, and directories of key organizations. The original mailing list was about 6,000 people and now is at about 8,000 “Science Findings” was also placed on-line.

This publication was augmented with another in 2001 called “Science Update.” “Science Update” has attributes similar to

"Science Findings" but the contents is more issue driven than science-driven. This quarterly publication was developed in response to informational needs of policy makers. They want information on emerging topics with similar features of "Science Findings." Whereas "Science Findings" has a format similar to a newsletter and covers specific research projects that are not time sensitive; however, "Science Update" is more of a magazine format intended to deliver information that policy makers or managers need quickly. It gathers from one or more research projects for a synthesis addressing pressing issues.

The combination of publications and the combination of hard-copy and electronic copy have created a very useful package that is effective in creating awareness of scientific innovations generated by the Pacific Northwest Research Station. "Science Findings" comes monthly and keeps its readers up-to-date on new scientific information. The monthly publication keeps the station visible with key clients who become aware of its new contributions on a very regular basis. "Science Update" provides scientific information on a hot topic that the reader might be addressing.

Process of Implementing PR Instruments

The idea for a publication to reach the target audience was initiated by the station director. A communication leader for the station developed the concepts of the publication, worked with the director to finalize the format and features, implemented the publication plan, and managed the publication for the first several issues. A managing editor was then assigned to oversee the day-to-day development of each issue and currently spends 25 to 30 percent of her time on the publication.

The involvement of the Station's top executive was essential to the publication's success. The publication reflected his perceptions of what was needed by the target audience and the Pacific Northwest Research Station. Implementation of the publication also provided a way to emphasize the need for scientists to package science findings as a product and communicate their forest management implications.

**Identifying
Target
Groups**

Because of the frequency of publication, the newness of reaching out to a broad audience, and the sometimes-reticent nature of scientists, the station director initiated an award process to encourage the assistance of scientists in the process. A call for nominations went out to all scientists in 1997 with criteria that included the needs of the publication including a detailed description of the scientific work that addressed publication elements, such management implications, and station objectives, such as integration of work from several disciplines in scientific work.

A panel of peers selected 12 publications based on the criteria. Each scientist or group of scientists who were selected received USD 10,000 for future research and their work was featured as an issue in the publication series. Scientists responded well and about twenty to twenty-five nominations have been submitted annually.

As this process for selection of issue topics was put in place, potential contract writer's work was reviewed. A highly skilled writer was selected that understood forestry issues and scientific processes. The contractor writer receives the nomination material and then interviews the scientists. Once written, the issue is reviewed to assure the information is technically sound and for policy considerations. The manuscript is edited by in-house technical editors and sent to a contractor for layout. Scientists are given the opportunity to review the final camera-ready version. The publication is printed in one colour of ink.

Ten thousand copies of "Science Findings" are printed each month. Each issue costs about USD 7,000 to produce including writing, layout, printing, and salary for a managing editor and technical editor. Each issue takes about 10 weeks from the time the writer begins to when it is mailed to readers.

The complement publication "Science Update" has topics selected by the station director depending on their perception of important issues facing forest policy makers and managers. Those scientists whose work is selected for an issue do receive an award of USD 10,000 to conduct future research.

The process of writing this publication is more complex than "Science Findings" because a variety of scientists are interviewed

**Provide
Confidence**

to develop the text. The publication is also more sensitive in terms of political interest and contents must be tuned to policy considerations. Because information may not necessarily be peer reviewed as it is presented, three scientific or technical experts with at least one from outside the Pacific Northwest Research Station review it. For these reasons, an in-house writer develops the text for this publication. The writer assures review of the publication for technical contents and policy considerations by a science manager.

This quarterly publication is printed in colour. Specific length is determined by how much text is needed to adequately address the scientific information and related issues but is kept between 10 and 16 pages. Colour photos, drawings, and tables add greatly to the publication's appeal and clarity in presentation of scientific information.

Distribution varies for "Science Update" and depends generally on the geographic scope of the issue being addressed and averages about 6,000. On an average, each issue costs about USD 15,000 to produce. Since the first issue was distributed in May 2002, issues have taken 4 to 6 months to produce from the time the writer begins to when it is mailed to readers. Synthesis of information across research projects and technical review require substantial time. Additional costs for both publications include development and maintenance of mailing lists and the cost of mailing.

Effects of PR Measures

"Science Findings" has become a popular method for scientists to publicize their work. The profile of the scientists and their contact information are important in engaging others to contact the scientists for further information and sometimes for collaborative efforts with other scientists. The Pacific Northwest Research Station has about 80 scientists and in 5 years about 60 different scientists have had their work featured. "Science Update" is much newer and in its first four issues has covered the work of 10 scientists.

Success of these publications rests with their use by readers. Do they find the publications to be scientifically credible? Will they

use them to help make decisions related to forests? Although a survey would be very helpful in determining success, one has not been conducted. A formal survey is key to assessing the usefulness of the publications and making improvements. But there are indications that the publications are successful.

- Requests are received frequently by people who want to be on the mailing list or who want groups of people placed on the mailing lists. "Science Findings" mailing list has increased by about 2,000 people since it was first published. This is by word of mouth. No advertising or marketing efforts have been undertaken.
- People contact the managing editor and scientists with comments after each issue is published. The number of people can range from 10 to 50.
- One way to judge the credibility of the information is that comments on a particular issue come from varied interests, such as industry and environmental organizations, in agreement that the information is valuable.
- An indication of the influence of the publications is by the types of people who say that the information they get from the publications is important: these include key policy makers at a regional and national level, U.S. congressional staffers, executives of non-governmental organizations, and land managers. A common comment is that they read "Science Findings" regularly.
- Reporters use both publications for newspaper and other media stories. Placement on-line is especially effective for reporters who research stories on the web. Stories about the Pacific Northwest Research Station have increased about 5 fold since these two publications have become available. Occasionally, the station's science information is on the front page of a major regional paper.



**Interactive
Communi-
cation**

Conclusion

Publications that are developed to reach wide audiences who are engaged in the management of forests can help various types of people become aware of scientific information. Two complimentary publications were developed to help people make decisions about managing forests. One is science-driven, one-colour, and delivered monthly to a consistent broad audience and the other is issue-driven, full colour, and delivered every three or so months to a targeted audience. Both are written and designed so they can be easily understood and read quickly. Together they have increased the recognition of the Pacific Northwest Research Station as a provider of science information that is relevant and important.

Southern Forest Resource Assessment – A Lesson in Releasing Controversial Research Findings

Carol A. Whitlock

Period of Time: 3 years

Problem: Assessment partners with unique interpretations to laws about public access to information; external pressure from different interest groups.

PR Instruments Used: Technical support; summary report; CD, Web based version; dedicated issue of the Journal Forestry; online availability of customized maps; expert workshops; public meetings; internal communication; media communication.

Causes of Success: Definition of the identity of the Assessment; participative communication; clear communication strategy; combination of communication instruments; providing confidence in the products (peer review); high priority of Public Relations. ◀

One key public relations role is to protect the ability of the organization to pursue its mission, which for a research organization is often to ensure adoption of scientific information. Following is the story of how public relations principles were successfully incorporated into the formulation, execution, and release of the Southern Forest Resource Assessment, a large-scale multi-agency effort to evaluate the current and future status of forests in the Southern United States.

Background

In the 1990s, the South became the primary source of timber in the United States as harvesting shifted away from the public forests in the Pacific Northwest region and technological enhancements began to favor southern timber production. The

result was concern about the South's ability to satisfy both the needs of a growing international timber market and the changing values of its own urbanizing citizenry. The "lightening rod" issue that crystallized this concern was a controversy over satellite chip mills, which had recently sprung up to meet the demands of a growing paper products industry.

The Southern Forest Resource Assessment was commissioned by the Chief of the USDA Forest Service for a region where forests are held, not predominately in public or forest-industry ownership, but by an array of landowners ranging from farmers to retirees to investment companies. More than half of the South's forest land is in individually owned parcels of 10 acres or less. With such diverse ownerships and objectives, questions like *"Are chip mills degrading forest health and the environment?"* and *"Is the South drawing too heavily on its timber supplies?"* and *"How are human uses of forests affecting wildlife and water?"* could not be answered without a comprehensive understanding of the history, status, and likely future condition of southern forests.

The Assessment was a three-year project sponsored by four Federal agencies under the guidance of the Southeastern Natural Resources Leadership Group and the natural resource departments of the 13 Southern States (Virginia to Texas). The Assessment leaders were Forest Service employees – David Wear, a research economist with the Southern Research Station, and John Greis, a water quality specialist with the Southern Region of the National Forest System. Their team of 25 scientists and analysts from government agencies and universities drafted chapters on social and economic issues, changes in forest cover, forest health, plant and animal communities, environmental quality, and resources at risk.

The team produced a 600-page technical report (Wear and Greis 2002a) consisting of 25 chapters and a 100-page summary report (Wear and Greis 2002b), all subjected to blind review (reviewers' identities unknown to the author) by more than a hundred experts from universities, government, industry, and environmental organizations. Additional products from the Assessment included hardcopy, CD, and Web-based versions of the reports; a dedicated issue of the *Journal of Forestry*; and online availability of customized maps.

The Risks

Large-scale assessments, especially those of western forest resources, typically become the focus of competing interest groups, creating pressures that have the potential to delay and sometimes permanently block completion. These pressures migrated to the Southern United States with the shift of harvesting from the Pacific Northwest region of the country. Although the intent of the Assessment was to create a shared understanding of southern natural resource issues and opportunities, any missteps along the way could easily have led to an inadvertent slide into the polarization that had characterized similar efforts in the Western United States.

1 Internal Partnerships

The Assessment was a partnership of Federal and State agencies, whose often differing missions made the collaboration challenging. All the partners had unique interpretations to laws about public access to information and divergent processes for approving documents and responding to media inquiries.

Two of the Federal agencies, the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, are primarily responsible for formulating and enforcing regulations; while the Forest Service concentrates on land management and the Tennessee Valley Authority land-management mission is secondary to its responsibility for generating electrical power.

In the 13 States, regulatory and management responsibilities combine and overlap in a myriad of unique ways. State agencies had developed an array of best forest management practices (BMPs) to protect water quality. The Assessment focused public attention on those practices, leaving agency officials vulnerable to criticism that their BMPs might be less rigorous and less effective than those of neighboring States.

Frequent and thorough communication was needed to build this fragile network into a solid partnership capable of withstanding internal turf issues and external challenges to the credibility of the Assessment.

**Definition
of Identity**

2 External Politics

On the national level, the three-year life of the Assessment spanned a change from a Democrat to a Republican Administration, each with its own priorities and its own position on regulation, economics, and the environment. Suffice it to say that the release of the Assessment could have been delayed indefinitely if the Assessment was perceived as a “Trojan horse” for the views and policies of the former Administration.

According to media reports and communications with the Assessment leaders, grassroots NGOs considered timber harvesting to be the greatest threat to forest sustainability and portable chip mills to be the greatest threat to forest health. There was no evidence to suggest that the NGOs would be likely to embrace any other outcome. At the other end of the spectrum, forest industry was fearful that the Assessment would support NGO conclusions, thereby leading to further constraints on their management options.

The media took a somewhat schizophrenic view of the Assessment. Reporters craved one source of credible information, fully aware that they lacked technical expertise in natural resource issues and that decision-making needed to be based on sound science. At the same time, although they did not know what to believe about the chip mill debate, they did understand the value of controversy in selling newspapers and advertising space.

Meeting the Challenge

Over the course of the Assessment, the leaders drew on technical expertise from the partner agencies and worked closely with public relations specialists from their own two Forest Service organizations. They had two goals before them. The first was to develop a process that ensured public input and buy-in. The second was to coordinate the work of the 25 authors – researchers, managers, and regulators – and more than a hundred reviewers from universities, industry, and NGOs. Their challenge was to do both while guarding against any premature release of unverified data and avoiding “politicization” of the peer review process – the way that scientists criticize and improve each other’s work.

1 Involving the Public

Before one author or reviewer was selected or one word of the Assessment was written, the Assessment leaders decided to use questions to organize the collecting, analyzing, and reporting of data. They first convened an experts' workshop to define a set of concerns and derivative questions. The information from the workshop was then released for public review and refinement at open meetings in five strategically selected locations. At each public meeting, attendees had the opportunity to participate in question identification in a small-group setting. The Assessment leaders combed through notes from the public meetings, developed a set of questions in a session that was open to the public, and subjected the refined questions to another round of public comment. The questions that emerged then became the "heart of the SFRA" and the contract between the Assessment team and the public (Wear 2002).

2 Capitalizing on Technology

The Internet played a critical role throughout the course of the Assessment. During the three-year period, visitors to the Southern Research Station host site doubled from 20,000 to 40,000 "hits" a day. Most significantly, the Assessment Web page offered:

- Biographies of all team members,
- timelines and progress reports for all Assessment chapters and documents,
- hypertext links within the technical report that allowed readers to follow their interests,
- drafts of chapters for public review and the option of submitting online comments while reviewing chapters,
- all the data sets used by the authors in preparing their drafts,
- posting of all public comments, *and*
- simultaneous media access to the draft and final reports (technical and summary).

On the day of the release, video downlinks of the news conference enabled reporters from small newspapers and broadcasters to attend without incurring travel expenses and time away from their workplaces.

3 Protecting Scientific Credibility

Publications printed by Federal agencies are rarely subjected to the blind peer reviews that would take place if the publisher were a refereed science journal. However, the advantage of government versus journal publication comes into play for long documents that require distribution to a broader audience than the scientific community. To ensure that the Assessment enjoyed the same level of credibility as a journal paper, the team decided that each of the 25 chapters would undergo a blind peer review by recognized subject matter experts from appropriate universities, corporations, and NGOs; and further, that the Assessment leaders would serve as referees for ensuring that important identified issues were adequately addressed by the chapter authors. With the identities of the reviewers only known to the Assessment leaders, the reviewers had the freedom to criticize the work of the authors without fear that their comments would be used beyond the context of the scientific process.

4 Internal Communications

By far, the most time invested in communications was with the partners and with their organizational layers, both in the field and in Washington and State capitols. Early meetings with the authors, editors, and publishers helped to create a consistent “look and feel” among the chapters. The Assessment leaders convened a special session in which the partners developed a consistent strategy for handling requests that might be submitted under the Freedom of Information Act.

The team understood that it would be folly to proceed with the release before all were comfortable with the Assessment’s conclusions, and they were committed to taking as much time as needed to achieve that goal. Regional leaders of the partner agencies became well versed in the Assessment findings and their public relations specialists were “in the loop”. Every Forest Service research and national-forest leader in the South had an opportunity to review the draft and to convene for a day-long meeting to discuss its implications. A contingency of resource

experts pulled from the 13 State agencies spent several days studying the draft document and offering questions and comments. And as the release date approached, Washington briefings by the Assessment leaders took place at least once and sometimes twice a week.

5 Strategies for Communicating Externally

Needless to say, communicating the gist of a 600-page report to a public that normally gets its information in 30-second sound bites was a challenge. Although the public would have access to the myriad of details in the report, it was important for the Assessment leaders to use their “15 minutes of fame” to synthesize those details into a coherent and accurate summary that was relevant to public concerns. To start the process of developing that summary, the partners gathered to brainstorm the toughest questions that reporters might ask. The Assessment leaders incorporated the questions into a set of key findings and messages, which they refined and rehearsed in two day-long sessions of intensive on-camera media training. By the day of the release, they could have recited their messages in their sleep.

**Communi-
cation
Strategy**

During the last month before the release date, the team came under pressure from the media and other interested parties, both to answer the overall question of sustainability and to share specific findings. Although these requests seemed innocuous, the team had adopted a policy of no early leaks early-on, because they realized the danger of providing piecemeal answers without the framework of a coherent and accurate summary. All review drafts were distributed only in hard copy, versus electronically, to reduce the likelihood of forwarding. By limiting chapter reviewers to one or two individuals, any leaks by a single reviewer would only reveal 1/25 of the Assessment content.

The Assessment leaders scheduled briefings for industry and NGO representatives on the morning before the public release, thereby providing enough advance notice of the key findings to prepare news releases and talking points for interviews.

And finally, the team designated a rapid response force to review media coverage and call reporters when appropriate to correct reporting inaccuracies and refute misstatements.

Measures of Success

The release of the Assessment was not without difficulty, but by-and-large the difficulties had been anticipated and plans were in place to address them. The upshot was that the team produced a draft for public comment and a final report within their projected time frames.

Under pressure from the media, some information leaks did occur but were minimized when the reporter was unable to confirm his sources and therefore could not get a jump on the story.

The team engendered enough confidence in the Assessment's credibility that the media built their stories on its findings rather than the validity of its findings. When one of the NGOs attempted to promote an 11th hour report, offering no data but presenting a competing assessment of southern forest sustainability, its leaders found a deaf ear in the media.

On the prompting of some from the NGO community, the Atlanta newspaper sent the Forest Service a query under the Freedom of Information Act. The query included a request for the identities and specific comments of the anonymous peer reviewers. After claiming an exemption to withhold passages that contained specific information about the peer reviewers to protect the deliberative nature of the scientific process, the Agency held its breath in anticipation of the appeal that nearly always follows such responses. None came.

Finally and most importantly, the South is using the Assessment findings to set priorities for research and public land acquisition, to attract and mobilize resources for high priority projects, to improve water quality through more effective Best Management Practices, and to formulate landowner and community assistance programs. The Assessment regularly appears in media reports, with combatants sometimes pulling out specific passages in support of their own positions. And the Forest Service Chief has been quoted as saying that the Assessment was largely responsible for crystallizing his thinking about the issues that threaten U.S. forests today.

The success of the Assessment was the result of linking sound science to high-level communications and public involvement. Virtually all of the credit goes to David Wear and John Greis, whose foresight was matched by their determination to see the project through to completion and their patience with those who needed to be brought along.

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The **IUFRO Task Force on Public Relations in Forest Science** came into being during the XXIst World Forestry Congress in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 2000. The Task Force has been helping IUFRO to play a greater role in strengthening the position of forest sciences in the media and in public. Towards this end the Task Force collates state-of-the-art knowledge, holds expert consultations and establishes a network among forest scientists from all over the world who are interested and involved in public relations activities. Through intensive internet and e-mail communication this network has collected a number of examples of successful public relations activities from around the world and has compiled this manual “PR for Forest Sciences”.

The **International Union of Forest Research Organization's Special Programme for Developing Countries (IUFRO-SPDC)** aims to strengthen the forest science community in developing countries and their role in shaping forest policy and management. Thus, IUFRO-SPDC contributes to broader economic, environmental and social development objectives such as poverty alleviation, improvement of the livelihood of rural people and their access to resources, environmental protection and the sustainable utilisation of forests. In order to enhance the ability of research institutions to generate and deliver scientific information and advisory services on forest and trees and their sustainable utilisation IUFRO-SPDC implements various capacity development projects such as training of scientists and scientific networking initiatives, and provides general support to institutional research networks in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

