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Public Relations (PR) Foundations

Public relations is the work of building and keeping trust between an organisation and the people it depends on. Those people — customers, neighbours, staff, partners, reporters, community leaders — form opinions from what you do, what you say, and whether the two match. Public Relations (PR) Foundations teaches the core of that work in plain language: how to understand your audiences, tell true stories clearly, work honestly with the media, and plan simple campaigns whose results you can actually show.

This course helps people starting out in PR and people who do PR without the title. If you run a small business and handle your own announcements, support a nonprofit's communications, work in an office where "can you write something for the paper?" lands on your desk, or hope to move into communications work, this is your foundation. Employers do not expect a beginner to know everything. They do expect the basics done right: accurate writing, respect for deadlines, honest dealing with reporters, a plan before activity, and evidence afterward that the work made a difference.

It matters because trust is slow to build and fast to lose. An organisation can spend years earning a good name and damage it in one careless week — a misleading announcement, an ignored complaint, a promise nobody kept. Good PR is not decoration added afterward. It is the daily discipline of making sure what an organisation does can honestly be said, and what it says is honestly done. That discipline protects reputation in a crisis, helps good work get noticed in calm times, and gives leadership a true picture of how the organisation is seen.

This is the foundations course. It teaches the essential skills in the order you will use them: what PR is, who you are talking to, how to write the core materials, how to work with media, and how to plan and measure a simple campaign. A second, deeper course follows this one and covers strategy, positioning, integrated campaign design, and counsel-level work. Master the foundations first. Every advanced skill in PR is one of these basics, done under greater pressure, with more at stake.

What You Will Learn

- What public relations is and is not — and how it differs from advertising, marketing, and publicity alone.
- How to identify and prioritise audiences and stakeholders, and what each group actually needs from you.
- How to find the true, provable story inside ordinary organisational work.
- How to write the core PR materials: the news release, the pitch, the statement, and the background brief.
- How to work with reporters professionally — deadlines, accuracy, exclusives, embargoes, and corrections.

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- How to plan a simple campaign with a goal, audiences, messages, tactics, a timeline, and a budget.
- How to measure outputs, outtakes, and outcomes without inflating results.
- The ethical lines that protect your credibility: honesty, disclosure, and never paying for editorial coverage.

Lesson 1 — What Public Relations Is: Reputation Is What You Do, Said Clearly

Begin with a definition you can use. Public relations is the planned, honest work of building mutual understanding and trust between an organisation and its publics. Every word in that sentence carries weight. Planned means PR is not improvised at the moment a reporter calls; it is prepared, like any other serious work. Honest means the stories you tell must be true and provable, because a reputation built on exaggeration collapses the first time it is checked. Mutual understanding means communication runs both ways: PR listens as much as it talks, carrying what audiences think and need back into the organisation. Trust is the product. Not attention, not applause — trust, which shows itself when people give you the benefit of the doubt on a difficult day.

PR is often confused with its neighbours, so draw the lines clearly. Advertising is paid space: you buy the slot, you control the message, and the audience knows you bought it. PR earns attention: a reporter, a community leader, or a customer decides your story is worth passing on, which is why earned coverage persuades in a way advertising cannot — and why you cannot control it the way you control an advert. Marketing focuses on selling products and services to customers. PR has a wider field: it protects the whole relationship between the organisation and everyone it touches, including people who will never buy anything. Publicity — getting mentioned — is only one small part of PR. A week of glowing coverage cannot save an organisation whose behaviour contradicts its stories, and the PR person's job includes saying so, respectfully, inside the building.

That internal role is the part beginners miss. Good PR starts before anything is written, in the meeting where a decision is being made. The PR question in that meeting is simple: "If this decision were reported fairly and fully tomorrow, could we defend it, and how would the people affected describe it?" Sometimes the answer improves the decision itself — a fee is explained better, a closure date is moved, a group that would have been surprised is consulted first. This is not PR as decoration. It is PR as an early-warning system, and organisations that use it that way have fewer crises to manage.

Reputation itself is worth understanding plainly. It is not your logo, your slogan, or your follower count. It is the sum of what people believe about you from everything they have experienced and heard, and it lives in their minds, not in your filing cabinet. You cannot set it by declaration. You can only earn it by repeated behaviour, and then describe that behaviour clearly and consistently. That is why this course keeps returning to one test for every piece of work: is it true, can we prove it, and does it match what we actually do? Pass that test consistently and

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reputation follows. Fail it once, publicly, and the failure becomes part of the reputation too.

The Steps

1. Write a one-sentence definition of PR for your own organisation, naming the publics whose trust it depends on most.
2. List the difference in your own work between paid (advertising), owned (your own channels), and earned (coverage and word of mouth) communication.
3. Identify one decision your organisation made recently and apply the PR test: if reported fully tomorrow, could you defend it? What would have improved it?
4. Audit your last five public statements or posts. For each, ask: is it true, can we prove it, does it match what we do?
5. Set up a listening habit: one regular way you will hear what audiences actually think — reviews, community meetings, front-line staff reports, or a simple inbox you truly monitor.
6. Write down the ethical lines you will not cross: no invented facts, no fake reviews, no undisclosed paid endorsements, no misleading images.

A Worked Example

When Grace took over communications for a family-owned hardware store chain, the owners asked her to "get us in the paper more." Her first month produced no coverage at all, and the owners were impatient — until she showed them what she had been doing. She had sat with returns-desk staff and learned that customers' biggest frustration was not price but confusing repair advice. She proposed the chain fix the problem before promoting anything: staff created a simple repair-advice card, tested it for a month, and tracked how many customers it helped. Only then did Grace pitch the story — a local store solving a real problem, with real numbers. The paper ran it, customers quoted it back at the till, and the owners understood the lesson that defines this course: PR did not invent a story. It found a true improvement, proved it, and told it clearly. The coverage was the last step, not the first.

Common Mistakes

- **Confusing PR with publicity.** Chasing mentions while ignoring behaviour produces coverage that contradicts experience — the fastest way to lose trust.
- **Treating PR as a megaphone only.** If audience concerns never travel back into the organisation, you are doing announcements, not public relations.
- **Buying the appearance of reputation.** Fake reviews, inflated numbers, and undisclosed paid praise are discoverable, and discovery costs more than the praise ever gained.
- **Starting with tactics.** "We need a video" or "We need an event" before asking what trust problem you are solving leads to busy work with nothing to show.
- **Promising coverage.** You can promise excellent, honest work. Coverage is an editor's decision, and anyone who guarantees it is misleading you or the editor.

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Lesson 2 — Know Who You Are Talking To: Audiences, Stakeholders, and What They Need

The most common beginner error in PR is writing for "the general public." There is no such audience. There are only specific groups of people, each connected to your organisation in a different way, each needing different information, each listening in different places. The professional terms are publics, audiences, and stakeholders. A stakeholder is anyone affected by what your organisation does or able to affect it. A public or audience is a group you are actively communicating with. Your craft begins with telling these groups apart and being honest about which ones matter most for the task at hand.

Start by mapping. List every group with a stake in your organisation or your announcement: customers, staff, volunteers, neighbours, suppliers, partners, funders, regulators, community leaders, reporters who cover your area, and groups who may oppose or question you. For each group, write three things: what their connection to you is, what they most need to know or feel, and where they actually get information. Staff need to hear news from you before they read it in the paper — a rule whose breach has damaged more reputations than any reporter. Neighbours near a building project need practical facts — dates, noise, parking — not your growth strategy. A funder needs evidence of careful stewardship. A reporter needs a true story, verified facts, and material that serves their audience. Same organisation, same week, four different communications. That is audience work.

Prioritisation is the second skill. You cannot serve every group equally in every moment, and pretending otherwise produces thin, generic messages that serve no one. Rank groups for each situation by two questions: how much does this affect them, and how much can they affect the outcome? The groups high on both come first. In a crisis, affected people outrank everyone, including leadership's pride. In a launch, the people who must act — book, attend, apply, switch — outrank the people who merely need to be aware. Write the ranking down. It will guide hard choices about where your limited time and budget go, and it gives you a defensible answer when someone asks why their group was not first.

Research at foundation level does not require expensive tools. It requires curiosity and records. Read the comments and questions your organisation already receives and look for patterns. Ask front-line staff what they are asked most. Read local coverage of similar organisations and notice what reporters find newsworthy. Run a short survey when you need numbers, and keep the questions few and honest. Keep an audience file — one page per key group, updated as you learn — recording what they care about, what language they use, what channels reach them, and what you last heard from them. Every strong campaign in Lesson 5 begins from that file, not from a blank page.

A final discipline: never write about an audience in terms you would not use to their face, and never treat any group as an obstacle to be "handled." People can tell when communication is designed to manage them rather than inform them. The groups you respect in private are the groups who trust you in public.

The Steps

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1. List every stakeholder group for your organisation or project — including staff, neighbours, partners, and likely critics.

2. For each group, write their connection to you, what they most need to know, and where they get their information.

3. Rank the groups for your next announcement or project by how much they are affected and how much they can affect the outcome.

4. Create a one-page audience file for each of your top three groups: concerns, language, channels, recent feedback.

5. Gather real evidence: review recent comments, questions, complaints, and front-line staff observations for patterns.

6. Set the internal rule in writing: staff and directly affected people hear significant news from you first, before any public announcement.

7. Review and update the map whenever something changes — a new service, a new site, a new partner, a new controversy.

A Worked Example

A community sports centre, where Ben handles communications alongside his manager duties, planned to announce extended opening hours. His first draft was a single social post aimed at everyone. His audience map stopped him. Current members needed to know the new hours and that peak-time crowding would ease. Nearby residents needed to know about lighting and closing-time noise — and they did not follow the centre's social accounts; they read the residents' association newsletter. Staff needed the new rota before either group heard anything, or the announcement would arrive as a rumour at the front desk. Ben sequenced it: staff briefing Monday, residents' newsletter item Wednesday written around noise and lighting facts, members' post and email Friday leading with the new hours. The residents' association, consulted rather than surprised, publicly welcomed the plan. One announcement became three honest communications, and the group most likely to object became a supporter — not through spin, but through order and respect.

Common Mistakes

• **Writing for "everyone."** Generic messages reach no one in particular and persuade no one at all. Name your groups and write to them.

• **Forgetting internal audiences.** Staff who learn their own organisation's news from the press feel betrayed, and they say so — often to the press.

• **Ranking by loudness instead of stake.** The group shouting on social media is not always the group most affected. Rank by impact, not volume.

• **Guessing instead of gathering.** Audience files built on assumptions produce campaigns aimed at people who do not exist. Use real comments, questions, and records.

• **Treating critics as enemies to defeat.** Critics often carry the information you most need. A stakeholder map that includes them honestly is a strength, not a concession.

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Lesson 3 — Writing That Gets Used: Releases, Pitches, Statements, and Briefs

Most PR writing fails for one simple reason: it is written for the writer's organisation instead of the reader. A reporter, an editor, or a busy member of the public gives your material seconds before deciding whether it deserves more. Writing that gets used respects those seconds. It leads with what is new and relevant, proves it with facts, quotes a real human being saying something a human would say, and makes the next step effortless. This lesson covers the four core documents of foundation-level PR and the rules they share.

The news release — also called a press release — announces something genuinely new: a launch, an opening, a result, an appointment, a decision, an event. Its structure exists because it works. A headline that states the news in plain words, not a pun and not a slogan. A first paragraph that answers who, what, where, and when in two or three sentences — if a reader stops there, they still have the story. Following paragraphs add why it matters and the proof: figures, comparisons, background. A quote from a named person with a real title, saying something specific that adds meaning rather than repeating the paragraph above it. Then the practical details — dates, prices, how to take part — and a short "about" paragraph describing the organisation in two or three factual sentences. End with a named contact who will actually answer the phone and email. Every fact in a release must be checkable, because reporters check, and one wrong figure poisons the whole document.

The pitch is different: a short, personal message to one reporter proposing a story. A pitch is not a release pasted into an email. It names why this story fits this reporter's audience, offers something concrete — an interview, access, data, a visit — and is short enough to read in under a minute. The statement is the document of difficult moments: a brief, careful response to an event, an allegation, or a decision. Statements are factual, dated, and restrained; they say what is known, what is being done, and when more will be shared, and they are the documents most likely to need review by leadership or legal advisers before release. The background brief — sometimes called a backgrounder or fact sheet — is the quiet workhorse: a one- or two-page factual summary of an organisation, project, or issue that helps a reporter write accurately. Dates, names spelled correctly, figures with their sources, a timeline. Briefs rarely get glory, but they prevent errors, and accuracy is a form of reputation.

Shared rules bind all four. Write in plain language; cut every word that exists only to impress. Put names, titles, and place names exactly right — a misspelled name tells a reporter how carefully the rest was checked. Date everything. Use one consistent set of figures everywhere, drawn from a single checked source. Keep a file of approved facts — founding date, numbers served, locations — so documents never contradict each other. And read every document aloud once before it goes: the ear catches the bloated sentence and the accidental double meaning that the eye skims past.

The Steps

1. Before writing anything, complete this sentence: "The news here is..." If you cannot, you do not yet have a release — you have an announcement looking for a reason.

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2. Draft the release in structure: headline stating the news, first paragraph with who, what, where, when, then why it matters with proof, then a specific human quote, then practical details and contact.

3. Check every fact against its source: names, titles, dates, figures, place spellings. Use the same figures as every other document you have issued.

4. Write quotes a person would actually say aloud. Read them to the person quoted and get their approval.

5. For a pitch, research the reporter first: what have they covered recently, and why does your story serve their audience? Keep it under 150 words plus the offer.

6. For a statement, write only what is verified, add what is being done and when you will update, and get leadership or legal review where the matter is sensitive.

7. Maintain a background brief and an approved-facts file, updated whenever figures change, and draw every new document from them.

8. Read the final document aloud. Cut one sentence in every paragraph that exists only to impress.

A Worked Example

Aisha writes releases for a regional food bank. Her first draft about a new warehouse led with the organisation's history and the phrase "exciting new chapter," buried the news in paragraph three, and quoted the director saying the warehouse was "a testament to our ongoing commitment to excellence." It earned no coverage. Her rewrite applied this lesson. Headline: "Food bank opens warehouse that doubles cold storage for fresh food across the county." First paragraph: who, what, where, when — open now, in the town, serving forty community pantries. Proof: storage rising from 20,000 to 45,000 meals' worth of fresh food, figures checked with the operations manager that morning. Quote, rewritten with the director's approval: "Last winter we turned away donated fresh food because we had nowhere cold to keep it. That ends today." Contact: Aisha, with her direct number. Two papers and a radio station used it, all repeating the cold-storage figure and the director's sentence. The difference was not luck. It was structure, proof, and a quote that sounded like a person.

Common Mistakes

• **Burying the news.** If the new fact is in paragraph three, most readers and reporters never reach it. Lead with the news or do not send the release.

• **Quotes nobody would say.** "We are delighted to leverage this synergy" fools no one. A quote should add a human reason, a feeling, or a fact — in spoken words.

• **Sending the same pitch to everyone.** A mass pitch tells each reporter they were not thought about. Research the outlet, personalise the reason, keep it short.

• **Inflating figures.** Rounding 340 up to "nearly 500" is a lie with arithmetic attached. Use the true number; a real number with a source beats a big number without one.

• **No reachable contact.** A release whose contact is away, unnamed, or a generic inbox wastes the interest it created. Name a person who will respond the same day.

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Lesson 4 — Working With the Media: Deadlines, Trust, and the Long Game

Reporters are not a distribution channel for your announcements. They are professionals serving their own audiences under time pressure, and the PR people they return to are the ones who make accuracy easier: who respond quickly, tell the truth including when it is unflattering, provide usable material, and never waste their time. This lesson is about that working relationship — the daily habits that earn it and the errors that destroy it.

Understand the reporter's day. News moves on deadlines that do not move. A reporter who calls you at 3 p.m. for a 5 p.m. bulletin cannot use your reply at 6 p.m., however brilliant it is. Speed of honest response is therefore a core PR skill. If you cannot answer fully by the deadline, say so early, give what is verified, and offer the rest by a named time. A reporter who trusts your "I will have that confirmed by four" will wait. A reporter who has been stalled with "we're looking into it" while you hoped the story would die will not wait again — they will publish without you, and your side of the story will be a line saying you did not respond. Being unreachable is itself a message, and it is quoted as one.

Accuracy is the shared ground. Provide names spelled correctly, titles exactly right, figures with dates attached so old numbers are not reported as current. If a reporter gets something materially wrong, correct it promptly, politely, and with evidence — most will fix genuine errors, especially online, when approached with facts rather than fury. If you get something wrong — a figure you supplied proves incorrect — tell the reporter yourself, fast, before they discover it. Voluntary correction is the single strongest trust-building act available to a PR person, because it proves your loyalty is to the truth and not only to your side.

Know the working terms and honour them precisely. On the record means anything you say can be quoted and attributed to you. Off the record means the information should not be published at all — agree it explicitly in advance, and use it rarely, because misunderstandings are common and costly. Embargoed means material is shared early on the agreement it will not be published before a stated time; breaking an embargo — yours or another outlet's — ends relationships. An exclusive means you offer a story to one outlet first; offering the same "exclusive" to two outlets is a betrayal that newsrooms remember for years. When in doubt, default to on the record and plain dealing. The clever arrangements are tools for experienced hands and specific situations, not everyday practice.

Finally, play the long game. Keep a media list that is a relationship record, not a spam list: who covers what, what they have written, what they asked for last time, what you owe them. Feed it with usefulness, not volume — a genuinely relevant tip, a fast answer, an invitation that respects their time. Never offer gifts, payments, or favours for coverage; that is not PR, and it corrupts both sides. And when coverage is fair but unflattering, accept it professionally. The reporter who wrote today's hard story is the reporter you will need on the day you have good news that must be believed — and they will believe the PR person who dealt honestly on the hard day.

The Steps

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1. Build a media list with names, outlets, beats, deadlines, and notes from every interaction. Keep it current; remove people who have moved on.

2. Reply to every media enquiry the same day, even if the reply is a holding line with a named time for the full answer.

3. Supply checked facts in usable form: correct spellings, exact titles, figures with dates, images you have the right to share.

4. Agree terms explicitly before speaking — on the record by default; embargo or exclusive only in writing, with times stated.

5. If you supplied an error, contact the reporter and correct it yourself as soon as you discover it.

6. If coverage contains a material error, request a correction calmly, with the correct fact and its source. Accept fair-but-unflattering coverage without complaint.

7. Never offer payment, gifts, or favours for editorial coverage, and never threaten to withdraw advertising or access over a fair story.

8. After each significant interaction, note what the reporter needed and what you promised, and deliver every promise on time.

A Worked Example

Daniel does PR for a small chain of care homes. A local reporter, Sarah, is writing about staffing shortages and asks for his homes' vacancy figures by 4 p.m. Daniel has most figures by three but one home's numbers are unconfirmed. He calls Sarah before the deadline, gives her the verified homes with their dates, tells her plainly that one home's figure is still being checked and will be with her by ten the next morning, and offers an interview with a care manager about what the work actually involves. The story runs with his figures, correctly dated, and the interview. The next morning he sends the final figure as promised. Two months later, when a rumour about one of his homes circulates online, Sarah calls Daniel before publishing anything, because she has learned his answers are fast and straight. He checks, confirms the rumour is false, and gives her the evidence. The story that runs corrects the rumour. That call — the most valuable moment in his year — was earned entirely by the earlier deadline kept and the promise honoured.

Common Mistakes

• **Missing deadlines silently.** A late answer is a missing answer. If you cannot make the deadline, say so early and give a time you will keep.

• **Hoping a hard story will go away.** Ignoring enquiries does not kill stories; it removes your facts and your voice from them.

• **Arguing with fair coverage.** Complaining about accurate but unflattering reporting teaches newsrooms that you only value praise. Save corrections for real errors.

• **Careless terms.** Casual "off the record" remarks and double-sold exclusives destroy trust in a single day. Agree terms explicitly or stay on the record.

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- **Spraying releases at everyone.** Irrelevant mass mailings train reporters to delete your name unread — including on the day your story is genuinely theirs.

Lesson 5 — Plan the Campaign, Prove the Result: Simple Planning and Honest Measurement

Beginners often experience PR as a stream of separate acts — a release here, a post there, an event when someone suggests one. Professionals work in campaigns: a connected set of activities, aimed at a defined change, over a set period, with a way to tell whether the change happened. A campaign does not need to be large. It needs to be planned. This lesson gives you the foundation planning frame and the honest measurement that completes it, because work you cannot show the effect of will always be first in line when budgets are cut.

Every campaign plan, however small, answers seven questions in writing before activity starts. One: what is the objective — the actual change you seek, stated so it can be judged? "Raise awareness" is not an objective; "increase trial bookings from first-time families in the north district by 20 percent by June" is. Objectives describe changes in what people know, feel, or do — and the strongest describe what people do. Two: which audiences, from your Lesson 2 map, must change for this objective to be met, and in what order? Three: what messages, built from true proof, will move each audience? Four: what tactics — releases, pitches, events, partnerships, your own channels — will carry those messages to those audiences, and why those tactics and not others? Five: what is the timeline, working backward from the date the change must happen, with media deadlines and internal approvals built in? Six: what will it cost, in money and in staff time, honestly counted? Seven: how will you know — what will you measure, from what source, compared with what starting point? A plan that fits on two pages and answers all seven beats a glossy document that answers three.

Measurement needs its own plain language, because this is where PR most often fools itself. Outputs are what you produced: releases sent, posts published, events held. Outputs prove effort, not effect. Outtakes are what audiences took in: coverage achieved, attendance, open rates, the messages people repeated back. Outcomes are what changed: enquiries, bookings, applications, behaviour, policy, trust survey movement. Report all three, labelled honestly, and never present outputs as if they were outcomes. Ten articles that nobody acted on are worth less than one article that filled a course. Beware the classic inflated measures: advertising value equivalency — claiming coverage was "worth" what the same space would cost as advertising — is widely discredited, because earned coverage and advertising are different things and the comparison flatters the PR person, not the truth. Use real sources: your enquiry records, booking systems, web analytics, sign-up lists, and before-and-after surveys with the same questions asked both times.

Close the loop after every campaign with a short, honest review: objective, what was done, what the three levels of measurement showed, what it cost, and what you would do differently. File it where the next campaign plan can find it. Over a year, those reviews become your real education and your evidence — to leadership, to funders, and to yourself — that the work is planned, honest, and improving. That file, more than any single piece of coverage, is what a

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foundation in PR is for.

The Steps

1. Write the campaign objective as a change you can judge: who will know, feel, or do what differently, by when, measured how?
2. Select the audiences from your stakeholder map whose change is necessary for the objective, and note the order they must hear from you.
3. Build one message per audience from true proof, using the headline-proof-detail structure.
4. Choose tactics that actually reach those audiences in the places they already pay attention — and write down why each tactic earned its place.
5. Build the timeline backward from the end date, including drafting, approvals, media deadlines, and the follow-up work after launch.
6. Count the full cost: money, staff hours, and what other work will not happen because this campaign is happening.
7. Record your starting point before activity begins — current enquiries, bookings, awareness figures — so change can be shown rather than claimed.
8. Measure and report outputs, outtakes, and outcomes separately, from real records. Never convert coverage into invented advertising value.
9. Write the one-page review within two weeks of the campaign ending: results against objective, cost, lessons, and what changes next time.

A Worked Example

A small adult-education charity, where Leila runs communications part-time, needed more learners for its free digital-skills courses — courses that were running half empty while waiting lists existed for the same skills taught commercially across town. Her campaign plan fit on two pages. Objective: fill the next term's four courses — sixty places — with first-time learners from two named neighbourhoods by enrolment week. Audiences, in order: past learners willing to recommend, community centre staff who meet residents daily, local reporters, then the wider public. Message: "Free, friendly, small classes where nobody is made to feel behind" — proof being class size capped at eight and two past learners willing to be interviewed. Tactics followed the audiences, not habit: briefings and leaflets for community centre staff, interviews with the two past learners pitched to local media, and only then social posts. Starting point recorded: eleven enrolments at plan date. Result: sixty-four enrolments, courses full with a waiting list; outtakes were two local articles and a radio interview, both repeating the class-size proof; outputs were modest — one release, six posts. Her review noted the community-centre briefings produced most enrolments and recommended doubling them next term. When the charity's funder asked what its communications money achieved, Leila's two pages and one review answered completely — no inflated values, just a change, shown.

Common Mistakes

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- **Objectives that cannot be judged.** "Boost our profile" can never be achieved or missed, which means it can never be learned from. State the change, the audience, the number, and the date.
- **Tactics before strategy.** Choosing the event, video, or stunt first and inventing a purpose afterward produces activity that photographs well and changes nothing.
- **Reporting outputs as outcomes.** "We sent twelve releases" is effort. Report what audiences took in and what actually changed, labelled as such.
- **No starting point.** Without a before figure, every after figure is just a number. Record the baseline before you begin, every time.
- **Skipping the review.** The campaign that is never reviewed teaches nothing, and its mistakes are booked again next term at full price.

Try It

Plan one real, small campaign for an organisation you know — real or a realistic practice scenario — and write the full plan on no more than two pages. Answer all seven questions from Lesson 5: objective stated as a judgeable change, audiences in order drawn from a stakeholder map you draw first, one message per audience with its proof, tactics chosen for those audiences with a reason for each, a backward-built timeline, an honest cost in money and hours, and a measurement plan naming the source for every figure, including the starting point you will record before anything launches.

Then produce the campaign's core material: one news release written to the Lesson 3 structure, and one personalised pitch of under 150 words to a named reporter or outlet whose audience fits. Finish with a one-paragraph stakeholder note explaining who hears the news first and why — staff and affected people before the public. Keep the plan, the release, the pitch, and the note together. Reviewed honestly, that small file contains the whole foundation: a true story, told to the right people, in the right order, with a way to prove it worked.

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