13 Representing the Organization "On the Outside"

Elected officials bring a very different set of perspectives and values than we bring. The sharper the divide between the policy/political context and the administrative, the quicker you get in trouble.

—Robert O'Neill, executive director, International City/County Management Association and former city manager

Unless you are trying to hide something, the press should be your ally.

—Jay E. Hakes, director of Jimmy Carter Presidential Library

Much of what we have discussed to this point has focused on the management of organizational behavior *within* public and nonprofit organizations. But leadership, communication, motivation, and other such issues also are very much at the center of the relationship between any particular public or nonprofit agency and the individuals, groups, and organizations surrounding it. A significant and increasing part of the success of any particular public or nonprofit organization will depend on the effectiveness of its members in working with others—citizens, the governing body, other public agencies (at various levels of government) or nonprofits, private groups and associations (including interest groups), and the media. In this chapter, we examine some of the special circumstances that those in public and nonprofit organizations face in representing their organizations "on the outside," as well as the special skills and abilities that will aid them in that process.

An early formulation by James Thompson (1967) suggested three different levels of organization: (1) technical, (2) managerial, and (3) institutional. The *technical* level is concerned with the actual task of the organization, the *managerial* level mediates between the technical group and top management, and the *institutional* level is concerned with the relationship between the organization as an institution and the wider social system of which it is a part. In this traditional view, those at the executive or institutional level were most likely to represent the organization externally. They would be the ones to represent the organization before the legislative and executive bodies, to bargain with representatives of other governmental and nongovernmental groups, and to address the media. But during the past 30 years, this situation has changed. Although currently those at the top probably still play more of an external role than others, managers throughout public and nonprofit organizations today are likely to be called on to represent their organizations externally.

What we are describing is an important theoretical development but one with direct implications for the skills required of today's public and nonprofit managers. Basically, the argument is as follows: We are experiencing a dramatic change in the way in which the rules and regulations, as well as the programs, technologies, and processes, that guide society are being developed—or, to put it somewhat differently, a change in the way in which public policy is being developed and social welfare efforts carried out. In the past, government played a predominant role in what some have called the "steering of society" (Nelissen, Bemelmans-Videc, Godfroij, &

deGoede, 1999). That is not to say that other interests were not represented as well, but in the past, government played a decisive role. Given the ever-increasing complexity of today's society and the ever-changing challenges and opportunities facing our communities, this traditional approach is no longer sufficient.

To use a sports analogy, the playing field on which the game of social welfare and public policy formation occurred was one that government created, and the primary players were elected public officials and policy advisers throughout government agencies. In turn, public administrators, playing on the same field (but often somewhere near the sidelines), were largely concerned with the implementation of public policies and social welfare programs. They were primarily concerned with managing their organizations so that the proper things would get done.

But time and circumstances have changed. The game of public policy and public value formulation and implementation no longer is played primarily by those in government. In today's increasingly connected yet diverse world, collaborations between a wide range of actors and organizations are needed to effectively accomplish public purposes (Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2014, p. 453). Indeed, one might even say that today the fans no longer are in the stands but rather are right there on the field, participating in every play. To put this more formally, there has been a reformulation of the steering mechanisms of society. As recent literature on cross-sector collaboration, network governance, and integrative leadership indicates, today, a wide range of nonprofit organizations, community groups, private businesses, and other interested parties are directly involved in the development and implementation of public policy and public programs (Bryson et al., 2014).

What we are witnessing is the development of many different policy or programmatic *networks*, with each serving its own substantive interests (e.g., transportation, social welfare, education). Each network focuses on its own particular issue area and, in many ways, defines the way in which policies and programs will be developed in that area (Lambright, Mischen, & Laramee, 2010). That is, one set of rules might define how the "foreign policy" game is played, whereas another set of rules might define how the "social welfare" game is played. But in each arena, major developments in programs and policies, as well as in the steering of society, are likely to occur through a multifaceted process of interaction, bargaining, collaboration, and negotiation within that particular network.

Under these circumstances, the roles of government and of the public manager are changing. As we witness a fragmentation of policy responsibility in society, we also must recognize that the traditional mechanisms of governmental control no longer are workable or even appropriate. Traditional hierarchical government is giving way to a growing decentralization of policy interests. Control is giving way to interaction and involvement (Bevir, 2011; Sørensen & Torfing, 2007).

As the steering of society has changed, the role of public and nonprofit administrators and the standards by which administrative performance will be judged also have changed. Public and nonprofit managers—at all levels—are becoming actors in the process of designing and implementing policies and programs, requiring the involvement of many different actors, both within and outside of their organizations. Increasingly, elected officials and public and nonprofit managers need to respond to the ideas of citizens and stakeholders not just by saying *yes* or *no*, but also by saying things such as, "Let's work together to figure out what we're going to do and then make it happen." In a world of active citizenship and community engagement, public and nonprofit leaders will increasingly play more than a service delivery role; they will play a conciliating, mediating, or even adjudicating role vis-à-vis public, private, and nonprofit groups and organizations (and others).

Where the traditional role of public administrators was primarily (but not exclusively) the management of the internal affairs of their organizations, external matters now increasingly occupy the time and attention of all public managers. In many ways, this may be less of a stark transition for nonprofit leaders and managers. Nonprofits have traditionally existed at the intersection of public and private organizations, relying on networks, collaborations, and a wide range interconnected actors to support and sustain their work (i.e., need for external funding, public support, and volunteers).

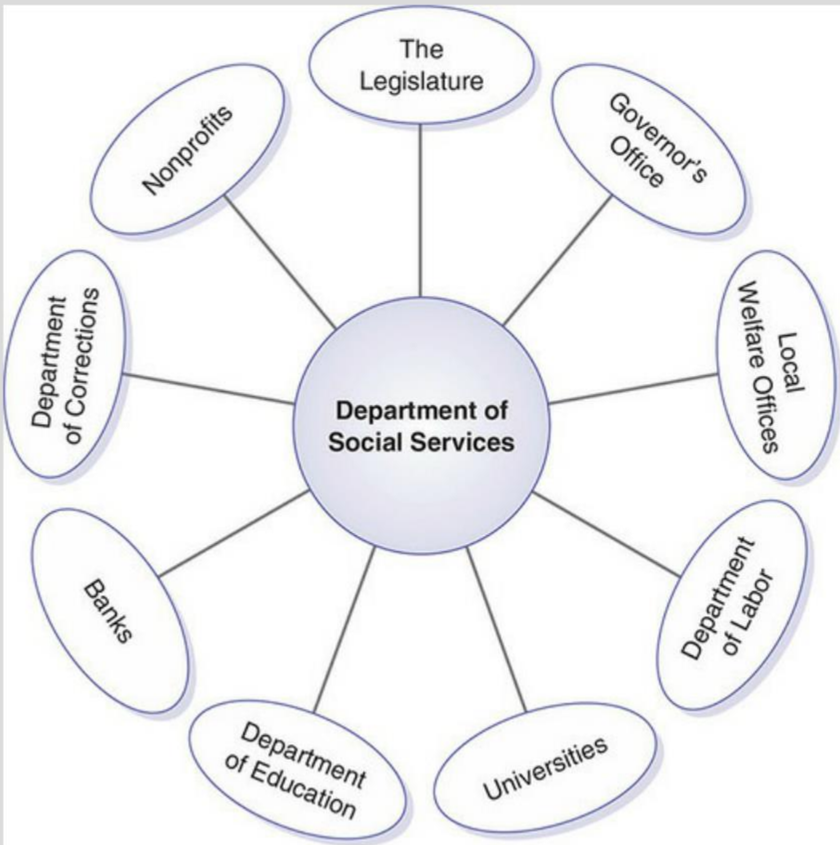
Today and in the future, public and nonprofit managers at all levels will need to be attentive to the core external skills of interacting with executive and governing bodies, using new media in communicating with the public, making effective presentations, and dealing with the media. But given the changing world around them, they also will find it necessary to improve their skills in listening to the voices of citizens, clients, and "customers"; to increase their understanding of how to involve stakeholders in their work; and to become more adept at building collaborative relationships with other groups and organizations.

Where Do We Begin?

Networks and Relationships

Focus on one particular agency—a federal agency, a state-level department or division, a city department or division, or a nonprofit organization. Construct a chart showing the major actors in the agency's environment that agency personnel must deal with on a regular basis. Put the agency in the middle of the chart, and then represent other groups and organizations with circles spread around the page. Vary the size of the circles according to the importance of the external agents (with the largest being the most important), and vary the length of the lines connecting the agencies to the focal agency (with those "closest to" or most friendly with the focal agency having the shortest lines). Use this chart to discuss the importance of the focal agency's relationships with various actors in its environment. Compare the various charts created in the class to examine how the external relations of different agencies can be quite distinct. Your chart should look something like the one in Figure 13.1.

Figure 13.1 The External Relations of a Specific Agency



Working With the Media

The following is a simulation involving interactions between a city manager and the local media:

John Brown is the city manager of Blackberry, Iowa, a community of about 80,000 people. Brown has established a practice of weekly news briefings with the local media. Media representatives who attend typically include someone from the local newspaper, a student reporter from an alternative local newspaper produced by the school of journalism at a local university, and occasionally someone from a local radio or television station. On this particular occasion, the local newspaper is represented by Cynthia Fox, a highly regarded local reporter with many years of experience covering city hall. The university alternative newspaper is represented by Gene Washington, a senior journalism major who counts Woodward and Bernstein among his investigative journalism heroes. The local television station is represented by Marilyn Sullivan, who hosts an early-morning talk show typically devoted to food and fashion.

Several things have occurred in the city this week that are sure to be topics of discussion at this week's briefing. First, the city has received a federal grant of $350,000 to help construct a new senior center that is very much needed in a rather poor area of town. There is no question that the center is needed, but the city will have to come up with $150,000 out of its already tight budget to match the federal grant. Second, the mayor has been accused by another member of the city council of misusing city funds by traveling with his wife to interesting places and asking the city to reimburse their trips as "city business." For example, they spent a weekend in Seattle, Washington, supposedly to attend the National League of Cities meeting—but the meeting took place after they returned. They also went on an economic development trip to Asia and then charged the city for an extra weekend in Singapore. Third, the quarterback of the university's football team was arrested for drunk driving following the team's last victory, a win putting them in line for a bowl bid.

Divide the class into four groups, one representing each of the people who will attend this week's news briefing. Each group should spend 10 minutes discussing the situation from its character's point of view and selecting a person to play the character. Then conduct a complete simulation of the city manager's briefing, videotaping the session if possible. Afterwards, replay the briefing and discuss both the way in which the manager played his role and the approaches taken by the various media representatives. What recommendations would you make for improving Brown's approach to the media?

As an alternative, the simulation can be repeated, changing the names to match genders of new participants in the simulation and rotating people through the various roles. Those not participating in the first simulation can act as observers and then discuss, or they can tape their own session without watching another one. The class as a whole can then watch all of the recorded sessions and discuss the different approaches various actors took.

Ways of Thinking

As noted earlier, public and nonprofit managers at all levels are likely to be involved in external relations of one type or another and need to develop new skills that go beyond those required for them to manage the internal operations of their organizations.

The Core Skills of External Relations

Managers at all levels increasingly are being asked to take on the responsibility of representing their organizations on the outside. As they do so, they will need to develop traditional skills associated with working with legislative bodies, public relations, and formal presentations, as well as develop new skills such as harnessing the power of new technologies and knowing how to effectively and authentically engage with citizens, stakeholders, and other external groups. In the following subsections, we consider the traditional skills.

Developing Effective Relations with Legislative Bodies

There are many different ways in which those in public or nonprofit agencies interact with elected officials, especially members of the legislative body. Given the unique and interdependent nature of public agencies and the legislature, a majority of what follows focuses specifically on examining the ways in which public servants can effectively work with elected officials. Even so, many of these recommendations will be also be applicable and useful to those working in nonprofit organizations, given that nonprofits are also heavily impacted by the actions of elected officials.

First, of course, most public agencies owe their very existence—and their continuation—to legislative action, either the action of creating or terminating agencies or that of deciding on levels of funding for agencies' activities. The legislature not only sets the tasks of public agencies but also defines the limits and boundaries of their activities. Agency personnel have an obvious stake in seeing that the outcomes of the legislative process are consistent with the objectives of the legislature.

Second, legislators exercise "oversight" of public agency activities, making sure that agencies are operating within the bounds of legislative intent and in a way that responds to citizen concerns. Sperry (1989) sees it the following way:

> Legislators often see themselves as watchdogs of the public purse and guardians of the public trust. At the national level, each congressional committee is formally required to continuously oversee the programs under its jurisdiction, and many committees have established oversight subcommittees whose sole responsibility is to perform this task. (p. 185)

Third, members of the legislature, acting on behalf of their constituents, often will make requests (or demands) of those in the agencies of government. Inquiries that come from members of the legislature acting on behalf of their constituents—often the result of legislative "casework"—are matters requiring administrators' special attention. Establishing quick and appropriate response mechanisms to deal with such inquiries can help to set a positive tone for legislative relations in general.

Fourth, members of the legislature depend on those in public agencies for advice concerning emerging policy issues. Providing this kind of education and information on policy issues is also one of the primary ways in which nonprofit organizations interact and engage with legislative bodies. Those in public or nonprofit agencies often are the real “experts” in their field and can provide helpful assistance in thinking through and developing policies and programs. Many public agencies are even involved in writing legislation to implement those policies or programs. Public and nonprofit organizations often are staffed and equipped to conduct the type of background research that is essential to developing effective public policies. Acting in this role, public and nonprofit administrators have an opportunity to “shape” the resulting policies and legislation in a way that is consistent with their ideas, missions, and beliefs.

Finally, public agency personnel often are called before the legislative body to provide testimony. Nonprofit organizations also voluntarily use these kinds of opportunities for testimony to advocate on behalf of issues important to their missions. Such testimony can range from providing advice on new policies and programs to defending agency practices that appear to have gone astray. The effectiveness of such testimony can help to build trust and confidence in agencies and their personnel, often leading to more ready acceptance of future recommendations.

There is often confusion around the extent to which nonprofits can formally engage with elected officials and participate in advocacy or lobbying. To clarify, *advocacy* involves efforts to broadly influence public opinion or generate support for an idea or issue, while *lobbying* is a type of advocacy that involves more targeted efforts to influence outcomes on specific legislation. Within certain parameters and legal limitations, nonprofits can engage in both types of activities. Unfortunately, given the general confusion in the sector about this, many nonprofits are not fully realizing their potential to engage in these ways (Libby & Deitrick, 2017; Worth, 2017).

These various interactions create some tension between public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and the legislature, tension that has become even more intense during recent years. But that tension serves important purposes in a democracy and should not just be seen as a source of annoyance. After all, our democratic process builds in tension (not a dichotomy) between politics and administration, evidenced here in efforts to balance legislative accountability and oversight with administrative discretion. “Relationships between legislatures and public agencies are defined by an ongoing tension between the need to ensure accountability and the need to provide administrators with the flexibility to effectively carry out their responsibilities” (Khademian, 1996, p. 171). The tension between accountability and flexibility can be quite difficult and demanding for some administrators, but recognizing the importance of that tension will at least make the situation more understandable.

At the federal level, the tension has increased over the past 20 years as oversight has become a more central role of legislators. In part, that change can be attributed to changes in the political culture. For example, public distrust of government and increasing political polarization has increased the attention that legislators pay to agency activities. Moreover, ubiquitous technology, the internet, and social media ensure that government activity takes place in even greater public view. Finally, the increasing influence of special interest groups means that legislators are called on more frequently to look into the activities of specific agencies. “Thousands of organizations, using ever more sophisticated methods to influence the legislature, have come to dominate some public policy issues. The use of political action committees and grassroots lobbying efforts increases the pressure on legislators" (Sperry, 1989, p. 181). And that, in turn, increases the pressure on agency personnel.

In any case, administrators should carefully think through their relationships with the legislature and take steps to improve those relationships. Fairly straightforward guidelines exist that should help in developing more effective relationships with the legislature:

1. *Build trust and confidence*. You are well advised to keep legislators regularly informed of your activities so that there are no surprises and to respond to legislative inquires quickly and accurately. It is important to share information openly and provide advice promptly, accurately, and in a thoughtful manner (Khademian & Sharif, 2015, p. 178). You also can help with legislative casework. "Helping legislators respond to constituents' needs in ways that are not inconsistent with legitimate program objectives can go a long way toward facilitating a good relationship and moving needed legislation forward" (Sperry, 1989, p. 187). All of these activities create an atmosphere of trust, something that is essential for effective legislative relations.

2. *Develop an agency protocol for dealing with legislative relations*. You should know who will respond to certain types of inquiries, decide the manner in which particular types of inquiries will be addressed (e.g., in writing, on the phone, through visits to legislative offices), and develop a tracking system for inquiries so that messages do not get "lost" along the way. By developing such an agency protocol, you can eliminate mixed messages, ensure greater accuracy and timeliness in your responses, and minimize the disruptive effects of inquiries.

3. *Understand the legislative process and the preferences of specific legislators*. Legislators must satisfy their constituents to stay in office. This means that you should have some understanding of what various interests or constituencies are saying. In this way, you often will be in the position to quickly respond to a legislative inquiry on behalf of a disgruntled constituent. You also must become familiar with the legislative process. Not only do you need to track legislation so that you will be aware of potential legislative actions that might affect your agency, but you also need to know where various legislators stand on issues of concern to you and your agency. But in all cases, you should avoid partisanship: "There is a need to know members and staff on both sides of the aisle, provide technical support and advice to both sides, and keep both sides informed of an agency's activities, particularly those that directly affect a member's constituency" (Khademian & Sharif, 2015, p. 160).

There will likely be times when you will be called on to testify before the legislature, something that many find quite difficult. In fact, Sperry (1989) wrote the following in agreement:

> There is probably no more potentially traumatic activity associated with legislative activity than making a formal statement before a congressional committee, a state legislative committee, or a city council. But administrators should consider it an opportunity. If the witness knows what he or she is talking about, acts in a professional manner, and provides honest and forthright responses to members' questions, the chances of coming out ahead are quite good. (p. 188)

Obviously, there are many ways of preparing for testimony, with the most important being to research the topic thoroughly so that you know the subject inside and out. You also can anticipate potential questions and prepare thoughtful responses that you might even practice with coworkers or colleagues. You can obtain information about the committee and be especially prepared to adjust to any last-minute developments. At the hearing itself, you should present a brief fact-based opening statement, be straightforward and direct in your answers to questions, and be respectful to those legislators who are present. You should be as brief as possible because there are likely to be others in the room waiting to testify. Avoid repeating what others have already said or at least try to approach the same issue from a different angle (Ohio Municipal League, n.d.). If mistakes have been made, admit to them but focus on the corrective actions that have been taken. As one public relations expert put it, “Stand your ground if you feel you are right, but remember it rarely pays to be argumentative with someone wielding a gavel” (Meek, 1985, p. 37).

Public Relations, Strategic Communications, and the Media

Public and nonprofit organizations exist within a larger, and very public, operating environment. As a result, there is a need for public and nonprofit leaders to carefully consider and manage public exchanges with citizens, constituents, stakeholders, and the larger public (Tschirhart & Bielefeld, 2012). The nature of these interactions and exchanges shapes public perception of your organization, which in turn can affect your ability to meet your mission, goals, and objectives. Unlike marketing that tries to identify and respond to needs and wants, “public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends” (Broom & Sha, 2013, p. 5). The goals of public relations vary somewhat between public and nonprofit organizations, but both are dependent on the quality of communication between wide ranges of stakeholders. Public agencies’ efforts in this area aim to inform constituents, ensure active cooperation with policies and programs, encourage citizen engagement, convey public opinion to decision makers, build community, and facilitate media relations (Broom & Sha, 2013). Public relations in nonprofit organizations are often integrated with marketing and development functions. More specifically, nonprofit public relations aim to raise awareness of the organization and its mission, facilitate communication between stakeholders, foster a supportive funding environment, support relevant public policies, and recruit key constituencies (Broom & Sha, 2013). Whether it is to raise awareness about a pressing public issue, enhance visibility and public support, or encourage stakeholder engagement, having a strategy for how your organization communicates with the public is critical.

There are several general guidelines that public and nonprofit administrators should be aware of as they interact with the media:

1. *Create a public relations and strategic communications plan*. A public relations plan begins by defining the goals and objectives that you are seeking. Are you concerned with presenting a positive image to the public by way of particular media channels? Are you most interested in letting the public know about upcoming events? Are you concerned with “damage control” when things go wrong? What are the specific goals that your organization has that might differ from those of others? With a clear idea of the issue, concern, or opportunity, the next step involves formal planning and programming to determine your target audiences,

objectives, strategies, and tactics (Broom & Sha, 2013). From here, your organization is then able to take action and implement your public relations and communication plan. In order to make sure your actions and messages are communicating what you want to communicate, remember the information and advice from Chapter 9 regarding effective communication. The final, and often overlooked step, in your public relations efforts involves evaluating your efforts to determine whether your actions have been effective in achieving your goals and objectives.

Public relations and communications will be the most effective when there is a dedicated staff member or team focused on these efforts. In public agencies, this is generally done through a public affairs office or the public information officer (Wheeler, 1994, p. 92). In many nonprofits, the executive director often assumes this role. Having one clear point person as the go-to for public communications gives reporters, editors, and other constituencies a source to contact when they need information and also will give the agency some control over its public relations. The designated contact person should become familiar with legal issues affecting media relations, including attention to privacy issues, libel/slander statutes, and copyright laws, and they should learn the full range of media terms, such as *background only* and *off the record*. But be aware that the use of these terms does not guarantee the safe handling of information. "If the information you have requires special handling, you probably shouldn't be talking to the press about it anyway" (Conner, 1993, p. 30). Finally, your plan should include your best advance thinking about how to handle crisis situations. For example, you should decide when to respond and when to let the situation pass, recognizing that sometimes reacting inappropriately just makes matters worse. In all you do, be dignified but also realistic. "You can't determine whether a story runs, where or when it will be placed, and what the headline, content, or tone will be" (Corporation for National Service, 1997, p. 10).

2. *Facilitate effective media relations*. The news media play an extremely important role in a democratic society. But many public and nonprofit managers find that working with the media is one of their most difficult and frustrating tasks. For administrators wanting to present the work of their organizations in the most favorable light, those in the media seem bent on telling only the negative side of things. For administrators trying to serve the public under difficult circumstances, those in the media seem only interested in uncovering scandals and wrongdoing. For administrators wishing to explain the work of their agencies fully and in great detail, those in the media seem only interested in the briefest "catchphrases" or the cleverest "sound bites." Yet according to Kenneth Wheeler (1994), public managers do not have an alternative:

> To be or not to be involved with the news media is not a choice that is open to government officials. The role the media play in the democratic process necessitates a relationship between media representatives and representatives of . . . government. The quality of the relationship is often determined by the . . . official's respect for the role of the media in a democracy and their willingness to be active partners in the relationship. (p. 91)

Media communicate both from government to citizen and from citizen to government. Moreover, the media inform the public about the activities of government and how those activities affect the public. They tell the public about those things that government is doing right and those things that government is doing wrong. On the other hand, the media also inform government officials about the public. They let officials know what the public is thinking and allow for feedback with respect to policies and programs. But the role of the media in a democratic society is not only to be a conduit of information; media also play an important role in holding government and publicly funded organizations accountable to the people. “Indeed, one of the first indicators of real progress in the transition to democratic governance is the existence of a free and open press” (Washington, 1997, pp. 29–30). For this reason, the very existence of a free press is protected by the Constitution, and the role of the media is preserved by judicial interpretation. “Among other things, the court [has] held that the public media’s vigorous pursuit of public wrongdoing [is] essential to the well-being of a democratic society and that this pursuit must not be weakened by the threat of court action” (Conner, 1993, p. 41).

Because the media play such an important role, and because the media are not going to go away soon, public and nonprofit administrators are well advised to develop a positive attitude toward media relations, learn all they can about how to interact most effectively with the media, and practice effective media relations. By developing effective two-way relationships with representatives of the media, you are more likely to be rewarded with fair and substantive coverage of those matters that are important to you. Above all, be honest and credible; tell a reporter that you do not know the answer if that is the case. Be consistent by communicating with journalists whether the news is good or bad. Be available to all (and do not play favorites), be sincere, and have a positive attitude. Be sure to return calls from reporters as soon as possible. You also should recognize that reporters are human, too, and that their mission is to find “stories.” Recognize that they are loyal to their readers or listeners and that they face pressures regarding accuracy of information, timeliness, newsworthiness, and competition (Conner, 1993, pp. 3–15). Occasionally recognizing the pressures and deadlines that reporters face will work to your advantage.

3. *Be proactive in your public relations efforts*. You should not wait for a crisis to happen before you develop public relations and communications strategies. For example, if you are trying to advance a particular policy or program, it would be wise to understand the current climate, know your supporters and resisters, and identify which channels of communication are necessary to be most effective in harnessing support. Involve the media in the policy process at an early stage. If you are able to establish positive relations with media representatives, then they might, in fact, be able to offer advice on questions such as the most conducive environment in which to launch policies. But this approach must be balanced, given that media considerations cannot be a reason for public officials to postpone or avoid making unfavorable announcements (Washington, 1997, p. 34). You also should remember that the media are not the only source of information that the public has. For example, you can disseminate important information through social media, or through advertising, consultations, or public events. (But here you must be careful not to exceed the limits of justifiable expenditures or excessively self-serving public relations.)

4. *Be prepared and be precise*. In any of your public relations efforts, the key is to do your homework, know your information, and know your audience. For example, when you are going to be interviewed by the media, begin by learning as much about the reporter as you can. Read what this reporter has written, or watch or listen to

one of the reporter's shows. Prepare answers in advance to questions that you think the reporter might ask. Decide on a couple of points that you want to convey, and figure out how you can work them into the interview. Ask in advance what questions will be asked, and let the reporter know if there are things that you would like to talk about. Remember to speak in plain English and not to get angry. Finally, in an interview or in a more casual conversation, do not forget that when you are in the presence of a reporter (who may or may not identify himself or herself as such), always assume that what you say could become public information. This same level of preparation and precision will serve you well in other forums where you are communicating on behalf of your organization (i.e., town halls, community forums, or fundraising events).

Whereas the previous guidelines may be helpful in developing an overall approach to public relations, there are several considerations that are specific to particular types of media.

Television.

Television provides a variety of means to get a message out—news programs, public affairs programs, talk shows, editorial commentaries, and public affairs programming. All of these may be broadcast by national networks, local news organizations, and public television. The key to approaching television is to remember that television messages must be short and simple. Even quite complex stories often are reduced to 30- to 60-second segments. Television reporters and producers, therefore, are likely to look for the brief summary statement or a catchy phrase (sound bite) that summarizes or expresses your viewpoint. In approaching television appearances, follow the rules of interviews mentioned previously. Obtain information about the format of the program and the interviewer's name and style so that you will know what to expect. Learn about what other guests will be on the program with you. Dress appropriately so that your clothing does not overpower your message. Arrive early to meet the producer, the interviewer, and others involved in the show. State your main point first and then follow it with supporting material. Try to stay on track, even if there are efforts to interrupt and divert you (General Services Administration, 1999, pp. 6–10).

The Print and Digital Media.

The print media (including newspapers and magazines) and online news sources typically provide more in-depth coverage of stories than other media sources and are read by people who want more detailed and complete information than might be included in a television news show. Consequently, they provide an opportunity for you to go into much greater detail about the work you are doing. In general, reporters for the print or digital media spend a lot of time learning about the issues and will be somewhat better at "staying with" the complexity of a story. (Note, however, that digital media, especially blogs, vary widely in this respect.) They also will appreciate all of the documentation and facts and figures that you can provide. Establishing effective relationships with journalists and regularly providing information, even detailed information, on the work of your agency should result in more accurate treatment of the stories in which you are interested. If reporters know the background of the story (usually something that has to be developed over time), then they will be more likely to agree with your ideas about what is important and what is not.

Radio.

In many ways, approaching relationships with radio reporters and personalities is like dealing with television journalists. However, radio audiences are much more diverse and specialized than television audiences. Most radio formats target a particular group or "market segment," which can be valuable, according to Wheeler (1994):

> The diversity of radio station formats provides opportunities for targeting specific audiences. A radio station's format—whether rock, classical, country, urban contemporary, all-news, all-talk, or Spanish language— . . . provides the opportunity to direct the . . . government's message to a particular age cohort or interest group within a community. (p. 102)

Press Releases and Press Conferences.

When you are preparing a press release, be sure that you have a genuinely interesting story to tell. Don't get a reputation for spreading trivia. Keep the message simple with one or two main points and some supporting arguments. Begin with the key points, such as the following: What is happening? Why is it important? Where is it taking place? Who is doing it? When will it happen? When you have your message worked out, be sure that anyone who is likely to encounter a reporter understands the message (CivilServant, n.d.).

Most experts—including Wheeler (1994)—agree that press conferences (or news conferences) should be used only when absolutely necessary and should be used for specific purposes.

> The general rule is that when you need to give the same information at the same time to everyone in the media, and when it is information they want and need quickly, then a news conference is in order. When in doubt about calling a news conference, don't. (p. 113)

When a press conference is necessary, try to achieve a smooth and concise tone. Start and end on time, have sign-in sheets and press kits available, respond to questions honestly and directly (promising to get back to reporters if you do not know the answers to particular questions and then doing so quickly), and politely end the press conference after a reasonable number of questions (but providing the opportunity for reporters to follow up with more questions).

Making Effective Presentations

During your work in a public or nonprofit organization, you often may be asked to make formal presentations. You may be asked to present a reorganization proposal to top management. You may be asked to explain a newly developed policy to a legislative committee. Or you may be asked to speak at an important fundraising event. In any case, your ability to deliver an effective presentation will have an impact on your organization's work as well as on your own reputation. In this subsection, we consider some of the elements that go into making a formal presentation—the planning stage, the pre-presentation stage, the presentation, the question-and-answer session, and using technological support.

The Planning Stage.

During the planning stage, you first should try to be clear about the *purpose* of your presentation. You should know why you were asked to speak and what the audience expects from you. (This will shape not only your speech but also your attire.) You should decide exactly what major points you want to get across. And you should think about the purpose of your presentation. Are you informing (e.g., providing information, demonstrating a technique, delivering a report), or are you trying to persuade or motivate the audience to do something or take a specific action? You also should think about your *audience*. How much do audience members know about the subject? (If they know a great deal, then an elementary presentation will bore them; if they know practically nothing, then you need to start with the basics.) You also should think about the audience's frame of reference. One speaker developed a presentation and handouts using baseball as an analogy. After asking some questions of the audience, he found out that about half of the people there were from outside North America and knew nothing about baseball (Abernathy, 1999, p. 22).

Once you believe that you have a good understanding of the audience, you should let that knowledge shape not only the *content* but also the *language* of your presentation. We know, of course, of the tendency for those working in a particular field to rely on the jargon—and even the acronyms—of that field. But if you are speaking to others outside of your field, then they might not understand what the words and letters mean. One speech expert complained, "When government workers toss off acronyms, abbreviations, and other jargon, people duck and miss the point. The way federal workers talk sounds like gibberish to outsiders" (Kogan, 1996, p. 53). But that is easy to correct.

Naturally, you should *research* your topic thoroughly and know the material very well. In addition, you should *organize* your presentation carefully. A message that is well organized is more likely to be retained and to influence listeners than one that is not. Moreover, careful organization improves your credibility as a speaker. The old recommendation to "tell the audience what you are going to say, then tell them, and then tell them what you have said" has considerable merit. For presentations dealing with new policies, programs, or ideas, as with many public and nonprofit sector presentations, one standard way of organizing is to (a) gain attention, (b) show a need, (c) present a solution, (d) describe what will happen if the proposal is implemented, and (e) call for support or action on behalf of the proposal. In any case, begin with some attention-gaining material and then state the purpose of the presentation. Limit the content of the presentation to a few (three to five) main points. Support your points with research, anecdotes, experiences, statistics, and the like. Then summarize and conclude with something memorable. Remember that audiences remember best what they are told first and last, so be sure to end on a strong point, perhaps even reserving a "prepared" conclusion for after the question-and-answer session (Davidson & Kline, 1999, p. 63).

The Pre-presentation Stage.

This stage includes those activities that take place just before the presentation. You should, of course, *rehearse* your presentation several times and, if at all possible, practice aloud so that you can assess questions of clarity and timing. The more you rehearse, the easier it will be for you to talk conversationally with your audience instead of simply reading your notes. Prior to your presentation, make sure you are in the *right frame of mind*.

If you tend to have excess nervous energy prior to presentations, then do something to work off that energy. Go for a walk, go swimming, or just be sure to be mentally active just before the presentation. If possible, *arrive early* so that you can become familiar with your location and take care of any last-minute problems with the layout of the room or with your slides or handouts. *Greet participants* as they come in; that way, you will be speaking to an audience with whom you already have a connection. Most important, *get excited* about the presentation. Remind yourself of how important your message is and how honored you are to be making the presentation.

The Presentation.

During this stage, you should try to *begin on time* if that is under your control. If you are not introduced to the audience, then *introduce yourself*, telling audience members of your background and credentials that are relevant to the presentation. If possible, *interact* with the audience or provide interactive handouts. "The more the audience is involved in the presentation, the easier and more fun it is for the presenter, and the more effective it is for the audience" (Robert Pike, as cited in Abernathy, 1999, p. 24). During the presentation, try to maintain eye contact and use conversational language spoken clearly and loudly enough for everyone to hear. *End on time*, and be sure to save time for questions.

The Question-and-Answer Session.

This stage encourages people to ask questions, even difficult ones (for which you should be prepared). Restate each question before answering. This gives you time to think about the response and helps the audience to understand the question. Answer those questions that you can, but do not bluff in response to those that are more difficult. If you do not know the answer, or if you believe that the question is beyond the scope of your presentation, then feel free to say so. If the question is a good one and you do not know the answer, offer to get back to the questioner and take his or her name and address. Remember that although you are an expert on this topic, that does not mean that you know everything there is to know. You will be better off giving an apology and a promise to find out the answer than providing a wrong answer.

Using Technological Support.

Today's audiences increasingly expect this, although that does not mean that every presentation needs to have lots of animation or audiovisual support. If you do use such aids, then be sure that they are employed to *enhance* the presentation and not to take it over. For example, do not use too much text on your slides or handouts. Instead, identify key ideas and themes and incorporate graphics, pictures, and charts to help make your points. Also, do not use too many slides. It will almost always take you longer than you think to get through your material. One slide every several minutes is plenty. Whatever you use, carefully proofread your work, including checking your spelling. Rehearse the full presentation, including slides, so that you are comfortable changing slides and you are sure that the timing will work. Try to get to the location of the presentation in advance to make sure that the presentation style fits the venue and to make sure that everything is working. Just in case there are power problems or equipment failures, have backups on paper. In any case, plan your presentation so that it will be effective whether technology is used or not.

The New Skills of External Relations

In addition to the traditional skills of external relations, today's public managers must be able to effectively understand and utilize new and emerging technologies; listen to the voices of citizens and stakeholders and understand how to involve and engage wider participation in organizational affairs; and become more adept at building collaborative relationships with other groups and organizations.

Using New Technologies

In the last 20 years, advances in technology have revolutionized the external relations landscape (Khademian & Sharif, 2015). Advances in social media, e-government initiatives, and digital and mobile technology have had a profound impact on administrators', citizens', and stakeholders' understanding and expectations for transparency, accessibility, and responsiveness. New and emerging technologies, social media, and the Internet have changed the ways in which public and nonprofit organizations operate, and the ways in which citizens and stakeholders engage and get information. Research has found that "about 80% of the population are now registered on social networks and nearly 90% of 14- to 64-year-olds use the Internet" (Klewes, Popp, & Rost-Hein, 2017, p. 20). Public and nonprofit organizations can no longer assume that the only messages and information their citizens, clients, or stakeholders are going to receive are ones that have been pre-packaged and approved through the public relations department.

Many government agencies at the federal, state, and local level, as well as many nonprofit organizations, are recognizing this fact and using new technologies when dealing with the public. In many ways, these organizations are putting on a new "face" to the public, a face that may be seen as helpful and friendly or tedious and confusing. In putting their best face forward, it is important for public and nonprofit organizations to design technological interactions with the public that meet high standards of excellence. For this reason, these organizations are investing substantial capital in order to interact effectively with the public using a range of new technologies. For instance, the federal government, through the General Services Administration, has established an Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies to bring together resources that will help governments at all levels choose the appropriate applications to meet their communication needs (see www.howto.gov). Similarly, governments at the state and local levels have established Offices of Information Technology and closely allied them with their Offices of Public Affairs or communications departments to carefully integrate technology with the communication needs of the government or agency.

For most governments and nonprofits, the first technological applications using the Internet were to create a web presence, typically one providing information about the services the government or agency provides and acting as a portal to access government services (this is sometimes referred to as *Web 1.0*). But, of course, from here it was only a small step further to create sites that would provide services in an interactive fashion. For example, in most states it is possible to renew your car's license plate online. In some ways, these customer service applications simply provided an electronic version of existing service provision. However, in other cases, these applications created new ways of providing services. In addition, new ways of gaining input from citizens were developed. For example, citizens may be asked to provide comments on the quality of services or make suggestions with respect to the provision of new services. (Using technologies that allow two-way communications and encourage the participation of citizens in an interactive way is sometimes referred to as *Web 2.0*.)

More recently, public and nonprofit agencies have used innovative technologies—ranging from the use of social networking sites to cloud computing to mobile apps—in order to communicate with the public, to improve programs and services, and to gain information and advice from citizens. While we briefly note here some familiar applications, you should be challenged to think of the way in which governments and nonprofits can most effectively use these applications. In any case, the use of such applications should be a part of the overall public relations and communication strategy and an essential part of the agency's communications plan. Similarly, many of the lessons of effective communications discussed earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 9 on communications must be followed in using these new media. For example, knowing your audience or communicating with clarity is every bit as important with technologically based communications as with in-person communications. Here are some now-familiar examples:

Social Media.

The influence social media and social networking has had on all aspects of society cannot be overstated. In regard to the public and nonprofit sectors, as Manetti, Bellucci, and Bagnoli (2017) explain, "social media have become one of the most important instruments of public engagement, interorganizational relationships, and public information in recent years" (p. 993). Social networking sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, or Instagram allow people to establish a profile and interact regularly with other members. A similar site, LinkedIn, focuses on professional networking. The most popular sites provide for the creation of groups as well, allowing for multidirectional information flow about topics of mutual interest. There are also increasing opportunities for distributed commerce on social networking sites, and this appears to have had a profound impact on the ways in which many nonprofits approach fundraising and donor relations (Campbell, Lambright, & Wells, 2014). Social media can be used to provide information to the public, particularly about new events or emerging policies, and to gain public feedback. These sites can also be used for recruitment and career mobility. There are hundreds of examples of social networking sites being used by governments and nonprofit organizations. For example, NASA created its own collaborative workspace site, CoLab, which provides a framework for partnerships between NASA laboratories and creative, tech-savvy professionals interested in contributing to the space program. The increasing use of social media channels by governments and nonprofits raises important issues of privacy, confidentiality, and security that should not be overlooked, but the benefits of judicious use of social networking can be substantial (Campbell et al., 2014).

Blogging and Microblogging.

Blogging provides staff and personnel with the opportunity to communicate directly and in detail with the public. Organizational priorities can be explained and actions detailed. The best blogs also provide an opportunity for direct feedback so that the organization can gather information about what the public is thinking on an immediate basis. Blogging is, however, time-consuming, and a blog can take time to get established. Blogs should not be used as another avenue for press releases but should be much more informal. Microblogging involves extremely short posts, using a platform such as Twitter. Government agencies and nonprofits use microblogging to try out new ideas and get quick responses; it is also helpful in developing communities of interest around emerging policies. Microblogging is becoming increasingly common during emergencies in order to get information out quickly, as in Amber Alerts or evacuation notices. (Similarly, many universities use text messaging as a way of informing faculty, staff, and students of emergencies on campus.)

Wikis.

Wikis, the most familiar of which is Wikipedia, provide a platform for people to collaborate in creating content no matter where they are located. An open wiki is available for anyone to contribute to, whereas a closed wiki is available only to members of a specific community. Wikis engage the shared knowledge of those who contribute and thus capitalize on the creative capacities of many people rather than one or two. They allow people to engage across boundaries, which can be particularly important in interagency collaborations. And they make the involvement of citizens in the work of government easier and the agency's work more transparent. For example, the city of San Jose, California, uses a wiki planning device to engage citizens in a "virtual charette" concerning planning issues.

Podcasts and Video.

Podcasts make audio files accessible online, and listeners can play them at their convenience. Users can subscribe to a feed of new podcasts relevant to material they are interested in and play those podcasts on any of a variety of media platforms. Although originally thought of as a place to find entertaining videos, YouTube is increasingly being used by public and nonprofit organizations that recognize the value and potential of video as a means of educating, informing, and engaging citizens and stakeholders. Waters and Jones (2011) found that nonprofits were using videos to increase the visibility of their organizations and programs, promote fundraising efforts, and recruit volunteers. In the past, videos were often time-consuming and expensive to produce. However, advances in mobile technology and social media platforms have made video production more streamlined and accessible. Whether it is live streaming public events or recording client testimonials, public and nonprofit administrators have a wide range of low-cost opportunities to integrate and utilize video in their strategic communications and public relations efforts (Waters & Jones, 2011).

Apps and Cloud-Based Platforms.

Advances in mobile technology and cloud-based services have dramatically altered when, where, and how people connect and communicate. Cloud computing, for example, allows users to access material stored on remote devices from any computer or smart device, thus providing greater ease of access. A government agency might employ cloud computing to enable citizen participation using wiki sites, mailboxes, podcasts, and online videos. The result could be a virtual town hall meeting. Government and nonprofit agencies are also using apps for smartphones to provide access to citizen services and to gain citizens' input. For example, citizens of Los Angeles can use their smartphone cameras to take pictures of graffiti or other "eyesores" and