

## Introduction

With the financial support of the Council of Public Relations Firms, the USC Annenberg Strategic Public Relations Center (SPRC) conducted a major study of the Public Relations profession. The study was explicitly designed to elicit and explore Generally Accepted Practices (GAPs), as well informational gaps in need of further research in the PR profession. In May/June 2002, a 25-question survey was mailed to approximately 4,600 PR professionals in publicly and privately held organizations throughout the U.S. If they preferred, the respondents could also complete the questionnaire online.

The goals of the study were to:

- Ascertain current Generally Accepted Practices, or GAPs, for PR;
- Explore “Best Practices,” for instance, which types of organizational structures, staffing levels, budgets, work environments and functions are common to the most successful PR organizations;
- Determine how organizations organize, staff, fund, utilize and perceive the value of their in-house PR departments;
- Determine how organizations work with external public relations agencies;
- Identify informational gaps in need of further exploration; and most importantly,
- Provide PR practitioners with practical, applied research, especially in the areas of organizational best practices and evaluation, that would be of direct use to them, and thus, help them improve their effectiveness.

A total of 328 questionnaires (7%) were returned. There were 145 males and 137 females (46 did not identify their gender).

Four principal methods were used to analyze the data: 1) for each of the individual survey questions, **raw frequencies** were tabulated for all of the respondents; 2) where applicable, **factor analyses** were performed to reveal underlying patterns in the data; 3) **explicit comparisons** were made between important sub-groups, e.g., companies that employ outside public relations agencies and those that do not; 4) **correlations** between major segments of the questionnaire were also performed to reveal additional, underlying patterns in the data.

This report is divided into four major sections:

**Section A:** An overview of the entire findings relative to all respondents;

**Section B:** An explicit comparison between 1) those respondents whose companies are on the list of Fortune's "Most Admired Companies" and 2) those that are not;

**Section C:** An explicit comparison between public and private companies;

**Section D:** "Emerging Best Practices," brief descriptions of those factors which, based on the research, appear to represent "best practices" of various types (strategic, organizational, budgetary, evaluative, etc.).