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Preface

Our purpose in this volume is to introduce you to the concepts of strategic public relations. Our basic assumption is that you have some general knowledge of management and business terminology; we will help you to apply that to the discipline of public relations. Our text is based in current research and scholarly knowledge of the public relations discipline as well as years of experience in professional public relations practice.

Whether you are reading this book to learn a new field, simply to update your knowledge, or as part of an educational program or course, we value every moment that you spend with it. Therefore, we have eliminated much of the academic jargon found in other books and used a straightforward writing style. We tried to make the chapters short enough to be manageable, but packed with information, without an overreliance on complicated examples or charts and diagrams. We hope that our no-nonsense approach will speed your study.

We use a few original public relations case studies that we have written for you so that you can see the concepts we discuss illustrated and applied. This book is divided into three large parts:

- Chapter 1 "The Importance of Public Relations: UPS Case", Chapter 2 "What Is Public Relations?", Chapter 3 "Models and Approaches to Public Relations", and Chapter 4 "Public Relations as a Management Function" focus on the importance of the profession, its taxonomy, the academic research showing how public relations should be conducted, and the function as a part of management.
- Chapter 5 "Organizational Factors for Excellent Public Relations", Chapter 6 "Public Relations and Organizational Effectiveness", Chapter 7 "Identifying and Prioritizing Stakeholders and Publics", and Chapter 8 "Public Relations Research: The Key to Strategy" offer a look at organization, its structure, effectiveness, and how the public relations process is managed—through the relationships with publics and stakeholders, conducting research, and the process of strategically managing public relations.
- Chapter 9 "The Public Relations Process—RACE", Chapter 10 "The Practice of Public Relations", Chapter 11 "Ethics, Leadership and Counseling, and Moral Analyses", and Chapter 12 "Best Practices for Excellence in Public Relations" provide an advanced discussion of public relations specialties by types: corporations, agencies,

government and public affairs units, nonprofits, NGOs, and activist groups. We offer guidance for perhaps the most difficult situations in public relations—counseling upon ethics and taking a leadership role—and finally we discuss what research shows regarding how to make the public relations function the best it can be.

We recommend reading the book in this order to build upon the logical flow of terminology, processes, and management knowledge. Here is a closer look at what we discuss.

To introduce the critical function of public relations to an organization and to show how public relations can work to prevent issues and crises, we begin with a case study of United Parcel Service in Chapter 1 "The Importance of Public Relations: UPS Case". Then we emphasize what was learned in this case from the failure of public relations in order to prepare in advance for any contingency. In Chapter 2 "What Is Public Relations?", we introduce the taxonomy of the profession and the concepts prevalent in the strategic management of relationships with publics, and introduce some different names associated with this function. Chapter 3 "Models and Approaches to Public Relations" is an exceptionally important chapter because it introduces the models and approaches to public relations that provide a taxonomy for evaluating communications efforts. The models of public relations are introduced through a brief history of the field, and we also examine the subfunctions or specialties within the profession. Numerous key definitions are provided to help you rapidly master the lexicon of public relations and its professional practice.

Chapter 4 "Public Relations as a Management Function" discusses the inclusion of public relations as a management function, roles and access to the C-suite, decision making, and the core competencies for working in business, including knowledge of strategy and profit motivations. We discuss how chief communications officers (CCOs) earn their seat at the executive table. Much real-world professional experience in business settings provide the backbone of the chapter. Chapter 5 "Organizational Factors for Excellent Public Relations" is extremely important because it discusses how public relations should be organized and structured, and how it should “fit” within the larger organizational culture in order to provide it with the maximum opportunity for success. The chapter draws on research from public relations scholars, business management scholars, and organizational theory. Chapter 6 "Public Relations and Organizational Effectiveness" provides an in-depth discussion of how organizations define success, and how the stakeholder management approach to public relations can provide a concrete strategy for enhancing organizational effectiveness and can contribute to the long-term sustainability of organizations.

How strategic public relations is practiced is covered in Chapter 7 "Identifying and Prioritizing Stakeholders and Publics". Strategic public relations begins with identifying and prioritizing your publics, and building ongoing relationships with them, based on the advanced concepts of stakeholder management. Research is an essential element in strategic public relations and an overview of those methods is provided in Chapter 8 "Public Relations Research: The Key to Strategy", as well as an explanation of the importance of research in strategy and in management. Chapter 9 "The Public Relations Process—RACE" gives an overview of the four-step process of strategic public relations management, abbreviated as RACE, and associated processes of analysis and planning.

The more advanced discussions of public relations as a strategic management function begins with Chapter 10 "The Practice of Public Relations". It provides a detailed look at the profession by highlighting the locales in which it is practiced, and it offers a discussion and application of the concepts presented earlier throughout this text. We attempt to integrate these theoretical concepts into the real-life structure of day-to-day public relations, and include a couple of case examples for illustration. Chapter 11 "Ethics, Leadership and Counseling, and Moral Analyses" establishes the ethical and moral guidelines for practicing principled public relations that enhance the social responsibility of organizations and allows public relations managers to take leadership roles in advising the top levels of their organizations. We follow that discussion with a look inside the top level of the Home Depot Corporation. Finally, Chapter 12 "Best Practices for Excellence in Public Relations" sums up the book by illustrating the best practices for excellent public relations. That summary of current research will reinforce your understanding of the lexicon of modern public relations management, how research says that it can be practiced most effectively, and the importance to an organization of strategic communication. That importance can be seen in the Entergy/Hurricane Katrina case that concludes our book.

We hope that you enjoy this executive text as we seek to help you master the dynamic field that is strategic relationship creation and maintenance through communication management.