



CHAPTER ONE

IDENTIFYING TARGET MARKETS

Saving Lives: New Jersey Search and Rescue

At 2:30 on an unseasonably chilly October morning, Oren Levin was awakened at his New Jersey home by his emergency beeper. The call from the Bergen County Office of Emergency Management informed him that two hikers were missing somewhere in the wild reaches of Campgaw Mountain Reservation.

Earlier that night, park police had found the couple's empty car in the camp parking lot—the only car still there, long after all the other hikers had left. Following standard procedure, and recognizing that finding the lost hikers was going to require people with special capability, the Parks Department had contacted the Bergen County Police, who in turn brought in the Bergen County Office of Emergency Management, which immediately alerted Levin.

Levin, a lieutenant in New Jersey Search and Rescue, Inc. (NJSAR) (www.njsar.org), quickly put the word out via the emergency Swift Reach Program. By 3:00 A.M., twenty members of NJSAR, all highly trained and experienced in wilderness survival and rescue skills, had rendezvoused at the park to begin the search for the lost couple.

With a professionalism born of long experience and training, the NJSAR team entered the woods to begin executing a standard search pattern. The temperature was dropping, and a storm was on the way. The missing couple would be at serious risk of exposure if not found quickly. Time was the enemy.

New Jersey Search and Rescue is a nonprofit organization whose ninety members meet at the Bergen County Law and Public Safety Institute. NJSAR receives no funding from any private or governmental agency. Members supply their own equipment and train for rescue missions in their spare time. One of the largest search-and-rescue teams in the state, NJSAR is a member of the Search and Rescue Council of New Jersey (www.sarcnj.org), which has thirty search teams statewide. Because search-and-rescue groups regularly call on each other for support, NJSAR has worked in wilderness areas throughout New Jersey and in neighboring New York and Pennsylvania.

Despite the life-and-death nature of the service the organization performs, the public generally does not know that NJSAR exists—not surprising, since the organization does not conduct any public relations (PR) operations targeted at the public.

“We don’t respond to a request for a search unless the request comes from a government agency,” Levin says, “so we’ve worked to establish relationships with police and fire departments and other agencies that may call on us.”

And NJSAR has been very successful in reaching out to that target market. The organization regularly has a display table or a booth at conferences of the New Jersey State Emergency Management Association, at the annual New Jersey First Aid Conference, and at the annual Bergen County Law and Public Safety Exposition. NJSAR hands out fact sheets about the organization to people who may one day call on NJSAR’s services. NJSAR distributes pocket calendars bearing the organization’s name to New Jersey park police and police chiefs. And the group relies heavily on its Web site, www.njsar.org.

“Getting the Web site up is important,” says Levin. “Government agencies in need of rescue teams have told us they found us through our Web site. We also use it a lot for internal communication with our members, posting meeting notices and other information on the site where everyone can access it easily. As for publicity in the local media, to tell the general public about what we do—basically, there isn’t any.”

This lack of visibility in the media is not due to any shortage of great stories to tell but, as for many other nonprofits, to a lack of focus on public relations. In this all-volunteer group, whose members all have jobs and families and countless demands on their time, the feeling is that no one has the necessary leisure to devote to public relations. But this is certainly not to say that a wealth of raw material for public relations doesn’t exist. For example, a TV station in Albany, New York, shot and aired footage of a NJSAR team engaged in a dramatic search for an elderly man lost in the woods. CNN taped and aired scenes of NJSAR on a wilderness training exercise. In both cases, NJSAR has been offered the footage. The professionally shot material could be used to make promotional videos for screening at conferences and expositions. It could also be used for public service announcements (PSAs) to be aired on local television stations. Another use would be as a B-roll (that is, background footage) provided to TV

stations interested in doing stories on the organization, to save them the time and expense of shooting the footage themselves, and to make the prospect of doing a story more appealing. But no one at NJSAR has the time to deal with recycled video.

NJSAR also has a wealth of great human interest stories that would be perfect for local print and electronic media. As a case in point, a local kindergarten class was studying good deeds. The class decided that every time a pupil in the class did a good deed, that pupil would put a penny in a jar. As part of their class project, the kindergartners studied search-and-rescue dogs. Eventually the kids collected \$84 in pennies and decided that they wanted to use the money to buy a search-and-rescue dog. Levin and another member of NJSAR came to the class with a dog and talked to the kids about the role that dogs play in the search-and-rescue process. The kids sat listening wide-eyed, and at the end of the talk they all gathered around the dog, hugging and petting him. It was a scene that begged to be photographed and run in a local newspaper along with a story about NJSAR. TV loves pictures, and the story would have made a great segment on the evening news. But no story appeared in the newspapers, and no segment ran on TV. No one was interviewed on any of the local radio stations. There was no media coverage at all.

For nonprofits of all kinds, this is an all-too-common story. Many nonprofits have equally compelling stories that go untold in the media. These organizations are not getting the public recognition they deserve for the good work they do, and they often refer to themselves as well-kept secrets. But nonprofits find that being PR-savvy pays. Getting stories in the press, or on radio or TV, can boost an organization's visibility and credibility, help increase membership, and enhance fundraising.

The basics of PR are fairly simple and straightforward. PR does not have to consume inordinate amounts of an organization's time or money. Public relations can help an organization achieve its goals. This book shows how.

As for the couple lost in the woods on that cold October night, NJSAR found them later that day—cold, hungry, and frightened, and scratched and bruised from too many close encounters with tree branches in the dark woods, but otherwise safe and sound . . . and very grateful to the men and women of New Jersey Search and Rescue.

Carousels for Ants

I teach a class at New York University on PR for nonprofits, based on my twenty-five years of experience in the field. For fifteen of those years I was director of public relations for American ORT, a nonprofit organization that supports vocational training programs for young people and adults in fifty countries around the world. I founded

and am president today of Access Communications, Inc., a New York–based public relations and training firm that works with corporations and nonprofits in the areas of health care, education, the arts, and community service. My class is based on real-life examples of public relations in action.

The students are either working in nonprofit public relations or very much want to be. Some work at small neighborhood nonprofits that help homeless children or counsel inner-city teens or support dance troupes. Others work at larger organizations like the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, the American Cancer Society, and the United Nations. Some make a living in the for-profit sector but feel a need to use their talents and abilities to work at something they feel is more personally meaningful. In my class, they seek the skills to help them make a change in their lives. They come from all over the United States and also from overseas, eager to learn how to use PR to mobilize support and raise money to help disaster victims in Armenia, train doctors in Poland, care for unwed mothers in Chile, and support the aged in Japan. Over the course of several recent semesters, I've had students from a Catholic high school in Connecticut, an Episcopal seminary in Austin, a Jewish synagogue on Manhattan's Upper West Side, and a Moslem cultural organization in New Jersey. They all want to learn how to use public relations on behalf of nonprofit organizations they care about. Many hope that PR will help them generate the money their organizations need to continue operations. Others need the publicity to bring in grants and municipal support. Still others urgently need to expand their groups' membership. They all believe that PR can help them achieve their goals. It can, and I show them how.

I begin the first class every semester by getting to know the students and their goals. And then I hand out the eggbeaters.

The students gather in groups of five or six, and each group gets one eggbeater. The assignment is to spend three minutes coming up with every possible use they can think of for an eggbeater—except beating eggs.

There is always a moment or two of hesitation while they exchange looks, trying to figure out what eggbeaters have to do with public relations. But then someone cranks a handle and says, "You could use it as a fan." And someone else asks, "How about a hair curler?" Another person tentatively suggests, "Maybe a back massager?"

Soon ideas are flying fast and furious. "A cat toy." "A wrist exerciser." "A carousel for ants." One silly idea leads to another, and soon everyone is laughing and tossing around off-the-wall suggestions. Even after I call "Time," people keep coming up with new ideas. And that, of course, is the point.

As I collect the eggbeaters, I point out that the class has just engaged in an impromptu brainstorming session. When you are brainstorming, any idea, no matter how seemingly silly or illogical, can be put forward without fear of ridicule. Most of the ideas people come up with are unworkable. And that's fine; that's what is supposed

to happen in a freewheeling brainstorming session. But among all the impractical ideas are always several that are actually pretty good. Unconventional, perhaps, maybe even weird, but good nonetheless. That is what comes from thinking “out of the box.”

The Nonprofit Difference

PR for nonprofits has things in common with PR in the for-profit sector, but some aspects are unique to the nonprofit world. The mind-set of supporters and professionals alike—that they are engaged in fulfilling a significant mission, as opposed to increasing a corporate bottom line—influences the choices that are made and how those choices are implemented. There are other differences as well.

“Nonprofits often face greater hurdles in getting their messages heard,” according to Howard J. Rubenstein, founder and president of Rubenstein Associates, Inc. (www.rubenstein.com), one of the nation’s largest independent public relations firms, whose clients range from the New York Yankees and BMW to the New York Philharmonic and UJA-Federation. “Because they usually have fewer resources, nonprofits need to find creative ways to get out their message. And they need to be persistent when it comes to pitching stories.”

Ken Sunshine, founder and president of Ken Sunshine Consultants, a leading public relations firm that handles celebrities like Ben Affleck, describes the “nonprofit difference” in starker terms: “When it comes to publicity, many nonprofits don’t have a clue.”

Limited resources are a reality for many nonprofits. But many nonprofits, despite sometimes being looked down on by the for-profit world as “not ready for prime time,” have an impressive record of success in getting their messages out to the media.

To be effective, a PR campaign for a nonprofit organization must take into account the goals and expectations of everyone involved: supporters, volunteers, staff, the population being served, and the media. With sound planning and some out-of-the-box thinking, an effective PR campaign can play a major role in helping an organization accomplish its goals.

PR: The Essential Element

There are 1.2 million nonprofit organizations in the United States, and they all need good public relations. PR is the key to survival for nonprofits, especially in hard economic times. Effective PR is essential to raising money, attracting members, energizing supporters, and fulfilling the organization’s mission.

With the proliferation of charities in recent years, all pursuing the same sources of support, competition among nonprofits has become fierce. As resources shrink and needs continue to grow, that competition has gotten tougher than ever. Whether the goal is running a successful bake sale or launching a \$10 million campaign, effective PR can mean the difference between success and failure.

Most of the support for nonprofits—76 percent—comes from individuals. In a weak economy, individuals cut back on their support. And they aren't the only ones. With profits down, corporations have also devoted less to philanthropy, as have the foundations that contribute to some 700,000 public charities, since their assets are tied to the stock market. The needs of a larger population must now be met with resources drawn from a shrinking pool of contributions. The result is increasing competition among nonprofits for limited resources.

Beating the Competition

One obvious goal of any public relations campaign is to stand out from the crowd. And when it comes to nonprofits, there is always a crowd.

People in the nonprofit world often don't like to think of themselves as being in competition in the way that businesses are. But the competition is there just the same, and it can be ferocious.

No matter what your organization's field of activity—health care, community service, education, the arts, environmental protection, promotion of cultural activities, historical preservation, or any other worthwhile cause—you are, in effect, in competition with all the other organizations that specialize in the same area. And not only are you competing with your sister organizations, you are also in *de facto* competition with organizations that operate in other areas. Despite the focus of your efforts, the odds are that you and your competitors are reaching out to many of the same people.

The reality is that people usually don't support just one organization. More typically, they support concerns ranging from the local to the global. It is not unusual for one person to support his local library, homeless shelter, and symphony orchestra while being involved with organizations that protect whales in the Pacific or support medical research in the Amazon or care for orphans in Africa. And then there is your organization, trying desperately to be heard above the clamor. That one individual may receive letters, appeals, and newsletters from literally dozens of organizations, all asking for attention and support. Therefore, one obvious job that your public relations efforts should accomplish is to help your organization stand out from the background noise by making a personal connection. In more hard-nosed terms, public relations can be a tool to help you beat the competition.

The Public Theater

Like many performing arts organizations, the Public Theater in New York (www.publictheater.org) is a nonprofit that seeks to bring performers and audiences together. Originally founded by Joseph Papp as the Shakespeare Workshop, it is “dedicated to embracing the complexities of contemporary society and nurturing both artists and audiences.” According to executive director Mara Manus, doing that places the Public Theater in the ring with some stiff competition. “So many cultural institutions are nonprofits operating with limited funds for marketing and publicity,” she observes. “They often find themselves competing with much larger and better-funded operations like Hollywood films and Broadway shows.”

Manus knows the “competition” at first hand. She was a studio executive for many years at Universal and also served stints at Warner Brothers and Columbia. Compared to the marketing budgets for Hollywood films, the promotional resources available to an off-Broadway theater are, to be kind, modest. “To achieve any visibility,” she says, “requires creativity and developing personal relationships with the media.”

Hitting Your Targets

Before you can hit a target, before you can even take aim, you have to be clear about what you want to hit. For a nonprofit, that means realistically identifying and defining its target markets. Note the plural: an organization doesn’t have just one market; it has several, each market with its own specific needs that must be addressed. The first thing, then, is to clearly identify those target markets and understand exactly what they need.

For each target market, ask who are you trying to reach. Who do you want to get your message to? Identify the people who care about what you do, or who would care if they knew about your organization. The more you know about the people you are trying to reach, the better job you’ll do of reaching them.

Kathryn Kimmel is vice president of marketing and communications for the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) (www.gia.edu), a large nonprofit in the jewelry industry. Her duties include responsibility for GIA’s considerable public relations campaigns. Her advice is to focus the PR message on what she calls “key constituents, or stakeholders.” According to Kimmel, “Audiences, communities, individuals, and organizations that are affected by what your organization does, or who have an interest in your organization, are your constituents or stakeholders. They must be your

primary, though not only, focus of communications. Know who they are, what their needs and interests are, and the various ways you can best communicate with them.”

To return to the example of New Jersey Search and Rescue, NJSAR’s target markets are fairly typical for a nonprofit organization. One market is the people being served—in this case, people who need to be found and rescued. Another market is the police and fire departments and other agencies that call on NJSAR’s services. Still another market comprises the volunteers who deliver NJSAR’s service—the club members who actually go out on the search-and-rescue missions. Then there are the organization’s supporters and potential supporters. Plenty of people would be happy to write checks if they knew about the group. Others would be pleased to donate equipment and supplies. It may be possible to generate substantial corporate support and find companies that would be willing to supply equipment in exchange for some of the favorable publicity the group can generate. Still another market is the media, always hungry for good stories. Meeting that need, providing the stories, would mean getting coverage in local and regional newspapers as well as on radio and TV. That coverage in turn would make people aware that New Jersey Search and Rescue is available to help whenever there is a need, and that awareness would lead to more of the rescues that are the organization’s mission.

Being clear about your target markets and about how to reach them allows you to focus your public relations efforts for maximum effect. The results can be quite remarkable, particularly where local publicity is concerned.

Variety of Target Markets

It is not unusual for a nonprofit to deal with a variety of target markets. Lynn Uhlfelder Berman, senior media relations manager at YAI/National Institute for People with Disabilities (www.yai.org), concentrates on getting her organization’s message out to them all.

“Defining our target markets can be tricky,” Berman says, “because there are so many audiences that we have to reach. There are two types of audiences for our materials—internal and external. I consider the internal target market to be our existing consumers and their families, our staff, current donors, people who are already connected to us. We also want to reach external targets, like families who have a child with a developmental or learning disability, and organizations that make referrals, such as hospitals and professionals in the field, so that they can learn from our expertise. This is an important part of our mission, since many of our programs serve as national models. We also want to reach potential donors and foundations, medical professionals, and government officials.”

To reach her various markets, Berman targets the mainstream media and has had consistent success placing stories in major metropolitan papers like *The New York Times*

and the *New York Daily News* as well as on local TV stations like WABC. She also targets selected professional journals in order to reach the medical community.

Berman isn't alone in confronting a variety of target markets. Cedric Bess, PR manager for the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) (www.prsa.org), says that the association offers the following definition of the role of public relations: "Public relations helps an organization and its publics adapt to each other." Bess's group identifies no fewer than seven different target markets, or "publics," with which nonprofits must communicate: employees, members, customers, local communities, shareholders, other institutions, and society at large. And the message often needs to be shaped differently for each of those markets.

Internal Markets

An organization's "internal market" is also very important and should not be neglected or overlooked, advises Alicia Evans, president of Total Image Communications, a New York-based PR consulting firm. Evans, who is also president of the New York chapter of the National Black Public Relations Society (www.nbprs.org), says, "Even a small nonprofit with limited resources can do a simple newsletter, either printed or online, for distribution to internal staff and volunteers. You can find free templates online that are simple to use and look attractive and serve well as excellent communication vehicles. Whatever vehicles are used, keeping up an ongoing communication is essential."

Pooch Publicity

When a municipal animal shelter in New Jersey was informed that budget cuts would force it to close its doors in just eight days, the operators despaired of finding homes for the shelter's 103 dogs. Any dog not adopted in those final eight days would be put to sleep. A local resident, Dr. Paul Hartunian, decided to help.

Hartunian, a veteran publicist and an avid dog lover, is also the cofounder, with Mary Cody, of a dog shelter called Aunt Mary's Doghouse (www.AuntMarysDoghouse.com). With time running out, he wrote a one-page press release and sent it to all the local media. The response was immediate, as it had to be, and in the shelter's final week of operation, all but four of the dogs were adopted by local residents, and rescue workers took those four. In the end, not one dog was put down. Such is the power of knowing how to use local publicity.

Kathryn Kimmel of GIA also encourages the use of internal newsletters: “Remember your internal audience. Some of your greatest advocates and communicators are within your organization. They have family members, neighbors, friends, and relatives who they constantly share information with.” Newsletters, she says, because they ensure that the organization’s internal audience is frequently updated, “can help to form a significant sphere of influence. Members of the organization should be the first to know, as much as is appropriate.”

In summary, then, it is the job of a good PR campaign to identify the nonprofit organization’s markets, recognize the specific needs of those markets, and then effectively meet those needs. Not every nonprofit is involved with matters of life and death, but many do touch people’s lives in very significant ways. It takes planning, organization, and an appreciation of how the process works, but the nonprofit organization, by defining its various markets and understanding what they need, can develop PR strategies to accomplish its mission.

The Media as a Market

The *Weekly Reporter–Chronicle–Herald News–Examiner*

To be effective, a nonprofit must serve the needs of the media. The media are focused on the need for good stories to tell, and for reliable sources of information to tell them. Media professionals appreciate people who help them to do their job. To get a better appreciation of what media people want, try putting yourself in their shoes.

Imagine, for example, that you are the editor of a small-town newspaper. Say it’s a weekly. Maybe it is called the *Weekly Reporter* or the *Chronicle* or the *Herald News* or the *Examiner* or some combination. Let’s call it the *Chronicle-Herald*. What does the editor of the *Chronicle-Herald* want? Well, for one thing, she wants to sell advertising. Lots of advertising. As much advertising as possible.

But why would someone want to advertise in a relatively small-circulation local paper like the *Chronicle-Herald*? Why, for example, would a local hardware store choose to run an ad week after week? The obvious answer is that potential customers will see the ad, which is why all the advertisers in the paper have chosen to spend part of their advertising budget with the *Chronicle-Herald*.

Advertising is a tricky thing, as much art as science. In a later chapter, we’ll look at the mechanics in greater depth. For now, a brief quotation will help make the point. The department store mogul Sam Wanamaker once said, “I know that 50 percent of my advertising is wasted. I just don’t know which 50 percent.” This is a problem for all advertisers. Part of the advertising budget is wasted. But which part? In the uncertain world of advertising, the local hardware store can be sure of one thing—many of its potential customers read the *Chronicle-Herald*.

Why? Take a look at any local paper. You'll see stories and photos, lots of photos, about local people. There will be articles about the high school football team, the local fire department, area museums, the library, the Founder's Day parade, the yachting regatta, and the annual flower show. You'll find flattering profiles of retirees with interesting hedges around their property, and photos of kids flying kites in the park. It is a natural tendency of people to want to read about themselves and their neighbors. And so the editor runs those stories and photos in the *Chronicle-Herald* to make the paper appealing to local readers. The editor works at building up a large readership because that is what gives the paper its appeal to local advertisers.

What the editor wants are stories that will interest readers. Stories about people. Human interest stories. Warm, funny, touching, interesting stories that will keep readers reading and advertisers advertising.

"The local press can be an invaluable resource for nonprofits," observes Howard Rubenstein. "People really read their local papers. Placing a story in a small neighborhood weekly can result in a lot of visibility for a nonprofit that needs to be noticed in the community. Never underestimate the value of such a placement. In addition to the local impact, such stories can be leveraged into national coverage in the print and electronic media."

The Montclair Historical Society, or Why Is Everybody Smiling?

Understanding exactly what an editor needs is the first step in knowing how to meet that editor's needs. In the case of the *Chronicle-Herald*, locally slanted human interest stories are the ideal. All you have to do is provide them.

A good example is provided by Kathleen Zaracki, a trustee of the Montclair Historical Society (www.montclairhistorical.org). Montclair is a New Jersey town blessed with a rich local history. The town was founded when New Jersey was one of the thirteen colonies, and Zaracki finds its history fascinating. But she realized that the average resident of the town, and the typical reader of the town's weekly newspaper, might not fully share her enthusiasm for local history. Wanting to get the historical society some publicity and lay the groundwork for the spring fundraising campaign, she decided that she needed to get the organization into the local paper with a story that would excite local interest.

Working with executive director Alicia Schatteman, her first step was to create an event that would get local kids onto the site of one of the town's historic houses. They invited the press, of course. At the event, they arranged groups of adorably photogenic kids listening with rapt attention to a storyteller dressed in a quaint costume of the colonial period. They also held a colonial crafts fair, where other kids learned how to make model birdhouses and corn cob dolls. They worked with the paper's photographer to make sure she got a lot of appealing photos.

White Gloves and Pearls

When I gave a seminar in Orlando, Florida, on public relations and marketing for two hundred presidents-elect of the Association of Junior Leagues International (www.ajli.org), I asked the attendees who they considered their target markets to be. The women had flown in from cities all over America and were a sharp, savvy group determined to be effective as new presidents of their local Junior Leagues.

We began by looking at the mission statement that appears on the organization's Web site and literature: "The Junior Leagues are organizations of women committed to promoting volunteerism, developing the potential of women and improving the community through effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Our purpose is exclusively educational and charitable."

Very impressive. Then I asked the new presidents about the organization's image: "What do people in your communities think of when they hear the name 'Junior League'?"

The answer came back, in an assortment of regional accents, from women throughout the room. "White gloves!" A few voices added to the chorus: "White gloves and *pearls!*"

All the women in the room were laughing now and nodding to each other as they agreed that, whatever the official wording, the image of the Junior League was the white-gloves-and-pearls set. What, they asked, could they do about that?

We continued identifying the chapters' various target markets. A woman from Atlanta suggested that one target market for the Junior League message was the organization's members. I wrote "Members" on my flipchart.

"Potential members," a woman from Boston proposed. I wrote down "Potential members."

A woman from the Midwest said, "Supporters." That was followed by "Potential supporters" from a Seattle woman. Then the suggestions slacked off.

"Any other target markets?" I asked. "Who else do you want to get your message out to?" A local Orlando woman put her hand up and hesitantly asked, "The media?"

I wrote down "The media."

We spent the next twenty minutes coming up with answers to the question of why the media should be interested in what the local Junior Leagues were doing. The answers focused on the projects that the Junior League chapters carried out in their communities, and on the fact that so many people were touched by these efforts and benefited from them. We looked at how stories could be shaped and pitched to the media, stories about things that the Junior Leagues were already doing.

Then we addressed the white-gloves-and-pearls question. Did it matter to the media? Wasn't the real story the tremendous impact for good that the local Junior Leagues had on their communities? How could that message be conveyed to this "other" market, the media? By providing the media with good stories in a form that could easily be used.

The rest of the presentation dealt with PR tools, but the presidents-elect had begun to see the media for what it is—another important target market.

Editors love warm stories and photos of local residents because they know that their readers like them, and if readers like them, so do advertisers. In this case, the photos worked so well that in addition to photos that appeared on the front page, another series of photos ran inside the paper along with a profile of the historical society, which got it some much needed attention around town. These pages also made wonderful reprints for later promotional use. Because Kathleen Zaracki understood the specific needs of her market, she was able to meet those needs and get her organization a valuable spotlight that helped launch that year's fundraising campaign.

What holds true for small local papers works equally well for the large metropolitan dailies. The circulation of *The New York Times* or the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* may dwarf that of the small-town *Chronicle-Herald*, but understanding an editor's needs and knowing how to meet them works the same way for the major press.

The same basic principles operate for coverage on radio and television as well. Understanding what the media need and packaging the materials properly can get your organization the support it deserves, and that support can work miracles. It can even put a man on the moon.

The Wisdom of Sun Tzu

The Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu, who wrote *The Art of War* around 500 B.C.E., is frequently quoted in business books. Many of his principles for running a war are adapted for the executive running a business. His goal was to teach generals how to win a war through wise maneuvers rather than costly battles.

Sun Tzu's writings also provide valuable insights for nonprofits. "Know your enemy and know yourself," he wrote, "and in one hundred battles you will never be defeated."

In place of the word *enemy*, try substituting other words. Try the word *volunteers*. Try *supporters*. Try *media*. They all work. Not that volunteers, supporters, and the media are your enemies, but they are on the other side of the equation from you.

Boxes of Love

Every Thanksgiving, in eighteen cities nationwide, an organization called Here's Life Inner City (www.hlic.org) distributes "Boxes of Love," containing the ingredients for a Thanksgiving dinner with all the trimmings to families in need. Meredith Gandy, who helps to run the New York operation, notes that Here's Life Inner City works with two different kinds of volunteers for the Boxes of Love project.

"One group of volunteers," says Gandy, "comes from inner-city churches. They are a part of the workforce that assembles the boxes, and they are the ones who deliver them to needy families in their own communities, often their own neighbors. The other type of volunteers at the 'packing party' are the non-inner-city people. They come to help because they are following their religious convictions to care for the poor. They are generally more affluent and more educated; they don't usually go out to distribute. Sometimes they are also donors, but not necessarily."

What the people being served need is relatively simple: to connect with the turkey dinners. To meet those needs, Here's Life Inner City has to let them know the turkey dinners are available and how they can be obtained, something that is generally done through local churches.

Now consider the volunteers who give their time to the organization, assembling Thanksgiving in a cardboard box. They need the tools to do the job. In this case, the term *tools* can mean the turkey dinners themselves. Tools may also include the actual physical spaces where those turkey dinners are assembled and the tables and the boxes too. In a sense, the volunteers themselves are also tools, providing the willing hands that get the turkey dinners out to where they are needed.

The volunteers have needs, too. They need to know that their efforts are valued and appreciated. Although they are not being paid a salary, they are not working for nothing. They are working for the sense of accomplishment and pride and fulfillment of their religious convictions that comes as a result of helping others less fortunate.

In addition to the volunteers who literally roll up their sleeves to get the job done, Here's Life Inner City counts on a nationwide network of supporters who provide the funding. As Gandy notes, an organization's volunteers and its supporters are not always the same people. In the case of the organization's Thanksgiving project, many of the supporters do actually show up each year to pack Boxes of Love and see that they are delivered to the people that need them. But most of the organization's supporters neither pack nor deliver. What they do is write checks. Those supporters are another market that the organization has to consider, and they are as vital as anything and anyone else in the whole operation.

To reach that market of supporters and potential supporters, the organization needs another set of tools: information tools to help raise the funds that keep all the wheels turning. The organization needs materials that will get people excited and enthusiastic about the organization's goals. That can mean printed materials like brochures, flyers, newsletters, and annual reports. Information tools can also include electronic and digital tools, such as videos and DVDs, the organization's Web site, and e-mail news releases.

The media can be seen as another market. Media coverage is essential to letting the world know about the Box of Love project. Getting the word out makes it possible to raise more money for turkeys, to enlist more volunteers to help with the packing and distribution, and to attract more supporters and more contributions to make all the rest possible.

The media need good stories to tell. Here's Life Inner City has to meet that need by preparing the kind of material the media can readily use. By doing it right, the organization vastly increases its media coverage. Increased media coverage generates increased support, which makes it possible for the organization to reach more of the people it serves.

How Public Relations Put a Man on the Moon

When President John F. Kennedy announced that the United States of America was going to put a man on the moon, he turned to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to get the job done. The people at NASA realized their first task was to raise public support for the program. A journalist who asked the heads of NASA what actually got those huge rockets off the launch pad and up into outer space probably expected a complicated explanation having to do with the laws of physics. The answer he got was far simpler: "Funding." The funding came from Congress, and what got Congress to vote for those funds was the public's enthusiasm for the space program.

That is why NASA decided to make national heroes of the astronauts in the space program. Tom Wolfe tells the story in *The Right Stuff*. John Glenn and Gus Grissom and the rest of America's first astronauts became household names because NASA knew that the public would not respond to abstract theories of aerospace and higher mathematics and geopolitics. People respond to stories about people—people they feel they know, people they have come to care about. NASA excited the public's imagination about the space program, and the resulting support made it possible to put a man on the moon, ahead of schedule. It was public relations that put a man on the moon, and if public relations can do that, think of how far it can take your organization.

New York Cares: Understanding the Market

Supplying what supporters want, giving that market what it needs, is the job of an effective PR campaign.

New York Cares (www.nycares.org) is a nonprofit that has great success in New York City every year mobilizing thousands of volunteers, who give time on weekends and evenings to help New Yorkers in need and to clean up, repair, and paint schools and community playgrounds around the city. According to Colleen Farrell, senior director of communications, approximately twenty-seven thousand New Yorkers volunteer with New York Cares each year. Volunteers come to New York Cares by word of mouth, the Internet, and traditional marketing and also through partnerships with local corporations who send employee teams to serve on corporate service projects. The agency's Web site is the primary tool New York Cares uses to engage and manage its large corps of volunteers.

New York Cares' team-based volunteer projects are especially popular with young, single New Yorkers. While working on a project, volunteers have an opportunity to spend informal time together in a pressure-free, nonwork setting. The good works of New York Cares are made possible in part by the agency's recognition that people tend to get involved with a nonprofit for many reasons, some of which involve giving back to others, while others focus on meeting other people and building social connections.

The agency has many supporters, from foundations to government, individuals to corporate donors. Major corporations in New York City have their own reasons for getting involved. Being involved with New York Cares enables corporations to demonstrate that they are good corporate citizens of the city, both through financial contributions and through direct service done by their employee volunteers. In addition to providing substantial financial support, corporations are a source of new ongoing volunteers, who may join New York Cares on their own after participating in corporate service.

Community service projects lend themselves to great photos that ultimately appear in company newsletters and local newspapers. Local TV likes the stories because they are visually interesting and show people coming together to help others. New York Cares gets significant media coverage for its work every year and that, in turn, fuels the support the organization needs to operate.

Because it understands the appeal of its programs to its corporate market and individual volunteers, New York Cares' brochures and marketing materials include information about the impact of its projects, as well as photos of smiling volunteers—typically young, attractive New Yorkers looking cool in their T-shirts with the red New York Cares logo. Marketing materials demonstrate that volunteers are having fun as they spend a day working on behalf of

their community. Furthermore, there are several examples of volunteers meeting Mr. or Ms. Right through their volunteer work with New York Cares. New York Cares' model of flexible, team-based volunteering for busy New Yorkers became the model for scores of other organizations around the country. Due in large measure to an understanding of what its various markets need, New York Cares continues to grow and attract new volunteers and new corporate supporters.

The better you know the people you are trying to reach, the better you will be able to reach them. Take the time and effort to do research and find out about the people in your target markets. The kind of information you're looking for is often called *demographics* and includes things like age, sex, educational level, profession, annual income, marital status, number of children, number of cars owned, political affiliations, religious preferences, number of vacations taken annually and to where, credit cards used, magazines and newspapers subscribed to, pets, hobbies, favorite charities, memberships in clubs and professional associations, and likes and dislikes.

You need to know enough about the people you are trying to reach in order to reach them effectively. You need to shape your message and your materials to appeal to the people who are your target market. This is not a one-size-fits-all world. People expect your message to be customized to their unique sets of interests. A thorough knowledge of your target markets is essential.

Your side of the equation is summed up by the phrase "Know yourself." It is essential that you realistically assess your organization, its strengths and weaknesses, its potential, and limitations both real and imagined. What is called for is an honest evaluation of what you can and cannot do, what you have and have not done in the past and why, and what you may be able to accomplish in the future.

Now is the time to get out the eggbeaters.

Gather a group of people whose judgment you trust and start brainstorming. No idea is out of bounds in a brainstorming session. Encourage everyone to suggest whatever comes to mind. Set a lively pace, and write down every suggestion, no matter how crazy. That is phase one. When you are done, stop and take a break. Go out for lunch, take a walk, and put it all out of your mind.

When you come back, you're ready for phase two. This is the time to review the list of things you wrote down in the earlier brainstorming session. As you go over your list, seek out the diamonds among the pebbles. Pull out three ideas with potential. Discuss how they can be implemented. Compare their relative potential. This is the time to be cold-blooded and logical.

Once you have determined your markets and their needs and decided how you can best meet those needs, and once you have realistically assessed your organization, its mission, and its capabilities, you can select the best PR strategies to meet your goals so that, in Sun Tzu's words, "in one hundred battles you will never be defeated."