What makes an effective press release: A coorientation approach

of public relations practitioners and news editors in sport

by

Joel Robert Janecek

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Suman Lee, Major Professor
Dean Anderson
David W. Bulla

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DEDICATION

To my wife and parents

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ABSTRACT

This study explores relationships between public relations practitioners in sport and sport news editors. As a viable communications method used by both public relations practitioners and sport news editors, the press release was examined using the communication theory of coorientation. The study used individual press release elements as coorientational objects. Seventy-five public relations practitioners, in this case Sports Information Directors at NCAA Division I institutions, and forty-four sports news editors who cover college athletics participated in an email survey. Research questions were tested on the relationships between agreement and accuracy as it pertained to the various press release elements proposed. Findings indicated that while some press release elements are in fact agreed upon, the two professional groups take an "agree to disagree" approach regarding other press release elements. Accuracy of the perceptions of each of the professional groups was quite low likely due to negative preconceived notions regarding the other. In short, both professional groups have inaccurate views of the others estimates of what are needed elements of a successful press release. Practical applications as well as suggestions for future study are discussed.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Public relations may generally refer to publicity an organization receives in the news media about its products and services — or some positive way in which it does business — for which there is no media charge (Seitel, 1997). Quite often, organizations carry out this task through the use of press or news releases. A press release may be written as a document to state an organization's official position, for example, in a court case or a price or rate increase. A press release in the sports world may be notification of player turnover or the most recent competition results. They are rarely printed verbatim as they are most often used only in part or as means to persuade editors and producers to consider covering a story. Frequently, the goal of press release writers is to influence various media to write favorably about the topic or organization being discussed. The press release, a highly valuable but often scorned communication device, is a staple of public relations practices. Most public relations professionals swear by them. News professionals across the globe swear at them.

There is no better, clearer, more persuasive way to announce news about an organization, its products, applications, and services than by issuing a press release (Marken, 1994). It is for this reason that the press release deserves special attention as a public relations communication tool in and out of sports.

Williams (1994), lists several reasons why press releases will continue to influence and persuade editors and communication decision makers to value these methods of public relations communications. He states that, "over time, releases can help define an organization's character and core values," (p. 7). Essentially, if an editor receives several releases on various new innovations from a particular company, that editor may begin to

perceive that company as a research and development leader. The editor may then lean on this company for expert knowledge in a future article about a related topic.

Further, Williams (1994) states that, "releases can provide inoculation from attacks" (p. 7). It stands to reason that if Company A has won several awards for health and safety, it could conceivably issue a release for each award obtained. That these releases may not be published does not mean, however, that the releases have not in fact been effective. For instance, if Company B unfairly criticizes the health and safety practices of Company A, the mere fact that the media have received the releases relaying the health and safety recognitions of Company A may cause an editor or journalist to dismiss the allegation or at least not see the issue as being newsworthy.

In addition, press releases provide context, allowing the source to tell a story often in a larger context such as the corporate strategic message (Williams, 1994). Press releases can give public relations professionals a chance to refute allegations and develop organizational positions on various issues.

Finally, releases are an important part of a public relations practitioner's communication arsenal because they can be targeted (Williams, 1994). According to Williams (1994), "press releases that do not see print are often too general and attempt to cover too large an audience," (p. 8). Releases allow the writer to specifically target essential audience members and tailor the content to their needs and tastes.

Press releases can be a (if properly written) viable and effective means of communication. Because of the general acceptance of press releases as a staple in public relations communications, one might assume that the vast majority of press releases are

published. Research indicates, however, that only three to eight percent of all news releases see print or make it to the airwaves (Morton, 1992).

What can account for this low success rate? Many media gatekeepers describe press releases as frivolous. According to the article, "In Defense of the Properly Executed Press Release," written by Doug Williams in 1994, "public relations professionals should be blamed for the bad reputation that press releases have gotten over the years…as a result of their bad, poorly written, non-strategic, self serving and lengthy press releases, public relations practitioners have caused this potentially significant tool to be scorned, ridiculed, ignored and even trashed" (p. 5). Are the majority of press releases poorly written, lacking strategy and perceived as not newsworthy or is there a gap between what media editors and press release writers see as essential elements of successful press releases?

Whatever the reason, the press release remains one of the most important public relations communication instruments. Even with its low success rate, every issue of the *New York Times*, *USA Today* and *Wall Street Journal* is littered with stories generated by public relations practitioners. A properly written press release can play a major role in establishing an organization's identity, invariably affecting the media and the general public's attitude toward their objectives and business practices. Press releases undeniably still have a place in today's public relations communications plans. Public relations practitioners in any field must understand the elements of properly written press releases, which have better odds at finding print or airtime. In order for more press releases to reach the public, practitioners must discover why over 90 percent of press releases distributed are not published.

The major problem here: there may be a gap between the elements that press release writers define as essential in composition and what editors and media gatekeepers prefer.

Interaction between both public relations practitioners and news editors creates certain knowledge, predispositions, preferences and values. If a difference in press release preferences exists between these two groups, understanding what each party considers essential press release attributes will translate into a better understanding of each other's professional needs. This understanding, in turn, may result in press releases more responsive to journalistic demands and routines. It is therefore essential to discover what type of relationship public relations practitioners in sport and sport media editors have in regards to their perceptions of press release. Finding a way to accurately diagnose the relationship can be done using cross perceptions. Using a communication theory known as coorientation, we may be able to discover if the two groups have consensus or dissensus about the elements of a properly written press release. By establishing the presence of, or lack of, discrepancies in press release opinion among the two groups, we may be better able to understand the working relationship among these two groups of professionals and be better able to present solutions that have potential advantages to both.

If one can discover what current public relations practitioners collectively identify as required elements of a successful press release and compare these findings to those expressed by media editors and gatekeepers, effective press release guidelines that are not based on trial and error or intuition can be established. Public relations practitioners could then better fashion releases responsive to what editors, producers and other media gatekeepers value as essential elements of press release writing, composition and style.

Three groups will primarily be benefited by the findings of this study. First and foremost, because only three to eight percent of press releases actually make it to print or on the airwaves (Morton, 1992), this study will make public relations writers aware of what

elements gatekeepers prefer in press releases, thus assuring that their information stands a better chance of being published. Second, successful press releases ultimately benefit the organizational source through increased media coverage of their business practices. Finally, mass media practitioners, in general, will find benefit in more effective press release writing. Because such releases are attuned to their needs and expectations, editors may find themselves using this source of news as a means to save time while providing valuable availability and information about the organization. If the release requires little editing and is written in such a form that it can be cut without losing any valuable context as inverted pyramid writing would allow, the editor will be able to insert the release into the medium with little time and effort invested.

The overall goal of this research undertaking is therefore to establish two things. First, what are the elements of a successful press release perceived by both public relations practitioners in sport and sport news editors? Second, what is the relationship between these two professional groups? Discovery of the relationship characterized by the perceptions of each individual group will provide a foundation to build more constructive future relationships.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to fully investigate this issue, it is important to know what previous literature and theory can tell us. There are several issues to be discussed here. First, one must be able to understand the relationship between public relations and media professionals in general as well as in the context of sport. Secondly, what does literature say about the proposed necessary elements of a successful press release? Third, what previous research has been done regarding press releases and potential publication. Next, what is coorientation and how can it be applied to how public relations practitioners in sport and sports media editors perceive successful press releases.

The Relationship Between Public Relations and Media Professionals

Public relations practitioners frequently rely on the media to take their messages to their publics. As their main means of communication to media editors, press releases play a pivotal role in developing a relationship between these two groups of communication professionals. For this reason, it is important to understand the nature of this relationship. The relationship between the media and public relations is a tenuous one; it exists more out of necessity rather than choice. Many public relations professionals have a negative perception of media practitioners, and vice versa.

Henderson (1998) asked, "Why does public relations have such bad public relations?" (p. 1). In her study, she examined the way the term "public relations" is used in 100 media articles that appeared from 1995 to 1996. Her findings indicated that a majority of the references to public relations were inaccurate and usually negative. Henderson's study

exemplifies the standing perception that the relationship between public relations and the media is a shakey one. As she describes, those in the public relations profession describe their field as a perfect picture of hard-working people with high integrity devoted to making their workplaces and communities a better place to live (Henderson, 1998). Outsiders, however, envision someone who more resembles a used car salesman placing a "spin" on automobile features that may be seen as less than favorable.

Effective media relations is an ongoing give and take process that, over time, gives both organizations what each needs.   Research surrounding the relationship between the media and public relations is limited to journal articles describing what XYZ company is doing to promote its services or products through effective media relations. Other media relations literature contains general do's and do not's on how to deal with the media sector from professionals in the PR field.

The Relationship Between Public Relations Practitioners in Sport and Sport News Editors

Many years ago, professional sports organizations paid for travel and food for sports writers who covered them, took them on junkets and showered them with gifts. Those policies changed however during the '60s and '70s as sports editors worked feverishly to cleanse their image as championship freeloaders. Newspapers stopped accepting free tickets and cases of liquor and sets of golf clubs were declined. It was time, the editors believed, for sportswriters to be treated with the same respect as reporters in other sections of the newspaper. (Wolper, 1996). While the relationship between public relations practitioners in sports and sport editors certainly used to have a friendship like quality, today it falls under

the same realm of relationship as general public relations practitioners and media editors previously discussed. Regardless of topic, there is a long-established notion that there is an adversarial relationship between the media and public relations professionals (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986).   Various editors' information needs may however vary and this thereby changes the dynamic of the relationship. According to Pincus, Rimmer, Rayfield, and Cropp (1993), "news, business, and sports editors, pressed by varying informational needs, view public relations professionals and the materials they offer editors differently…sports editors in the study, saw the public relations activities the most positively and news editors least favorably," (p. 41-42).

One can therefore not assume that all section editors are created equal. Public relations practitioners in sport play a large role in providing information to sports editors. Without the sports organization providing access to its players, the sports media would have little to talk about. This serves as the primary difference between the sports specific PR to media relationship and the general PR to media relationship. The two professional groups one could say then have a sort of symbiotic relationship; a relationship which is mutually beneficial for both participants.

Elements of Successful Press Release

Current research on press release effectiveness is dominated by those in the public relations profession whose assertions generally lack empirical evidence. Current studies proclaim what elements public relations practitioners deem necessary for publishable press releases. For example, Fey (2003) lists the 10 "sins" to avoid when sending out press releases. Among them are: "Thou shalt not create a news release with no real news

value…Thou shalt not submit blatant commercialism…Thou shalt not create an unprofessional release" (p. 14). She goes on to describe seven additional "sins" to avoid if writers and their respective businesses wish to see their press releases published. Such guidelines are often buttressed by the author's often extensive professional experience. Fey (2003), for example, is described as a PR expert with "more than 17 years of marketing experience with a diverse range of products and services" (p. 14). Her suggestions, like those of others, are rooted in trial and error. In another case, John Hewitt listed several "tips" to help press release writers accomplish the daunting task of writing publishable press releases. Hewitt (1999), suggests among other things, that press releases should "make it easy on the eyes" (p. 47). To validate his credibility at the end of the article, Hewitt is described as the "curator and Webmaster of the Writer's Resource Center" (Hewitt, 1999).

In another example, Morton (1992), states that "practitioners who have high acceptance rates for their press releases (a) write in a simpler style, (b) select different types of information and package information differently than the rest of us…most importantly, (c) they make their releases relevant to the readers of their targeted newspapers" (p. 10). Morton later asks why do some editors and others describe press releases as frivolous? O'Dwyer's research (1993), indicates that the vast majority of public relations releases don't contain any of these elements, limiting their chances of "seeing the light of print" (p. 4). Morton (1992), feels that there are primarily three elements that are overlooked when a press release misses out on publication. The researcher lists these as "1.) releases are poorly written, 2.) releases are rarely localized, and 3.) releases are not newsworthy," (p. 11).

Regarding the essential elements of a press release, several public relations texts do exist and all appear to fall into generally four categories: news value, format, style, and

content. Often listed elements under news value include: having a well defined purpose, focusing on one central subject, subject is newsworthy, factual, appropriate quotes, and pertinent information. Elements commonly listed in regards to format include things such as spacing, paper, identification, release date, margins, length, paragraphs, slug lines, headlines, proofreading, and timing. Elements commonly listed under style include, appropriate gender use, capitalization, abbreviations, numbers, spelling and punctuation. Finally, commonly listed elements regarding content include proper pyramid structure, the ability to answer all pertinent questions using the five "w"s (who-what-when-where-why), and objectivity. It is important to answer these questions of which elements are essential to success and do editors feel the same way?

To answer these questions, as will be detailed in the methods section, both the writers of press releases and the editors who chose to print or not to print them will be asked through a survey what they perceive are the necessary elements that comprise a useful and successful press release. To format the survey the "tips," suggestions, lists and essentials that have been listed in the above articles, similar articles, and various public relations texts will be complied. These "tips" or lists of necessary elements will be formatted into a general list of elements so that practitioners and editors can place value to its perceived necessity.

But what about those who make the decision whether or not a press release is to see print? What editors in the news media see as necessary for effective press releases is seldom explained. Releases do have a place in today's public relations plans, but only if they are written in a way that would benefit the writer, the news editor and the public. Without this important input, the practice of writing press releases will continue to be more of an inexact science, awash in uninventive, ill-conceived strategy.

While it is true that the press release written for sport is very different than a release written to announce the global expansion of a large economic institution, the two really should not differ in composition and style. According to a March 1997 issue of *Entrepreneur Magazine*, "All press releases are structured the same way." Press releases writing for any purpose should answer five essential questions: Is it easy to read? Have you double-checked your spelling and grammar? Did you include the six news elements? Did you include a contact source? Have you included a dateline? (Entrepreneur, 1997).

Research described above details various suggestions for press release writing. While press release writing tips abound, there has not been much specific research about the relationship between public relations practitioners and media editors in regards to press releases. There has however, been research conducted regarding why some releases are published ahead of others.

Press Release Selection Research

Recognizing that press releases play a major role in creating publicity for the clients of PR professionals John Minnis and Cornelius Pratt (1995) took on a study to attempt to identify criteria used by editors of a weekly newspaper in selecting and rejecting press releases. The study gave the news, entertainment, and features editors at the paper a one-page, four-part coding form to fill out for each release that was routed to them during a randomly selected, five-day workweek. Minnis and Pratt, (1995) discovered, "that the press releases that tend to be accepted by the editors were those that discussed coming events…more importantly, majority of those accepted were press releases that had a local angle and were well-written," (p. 14). This study used the editors themselves as coders over

the course of a week. Acknowledging only one side of the media editor/public relations practitioner relationship, the study ignores the perceptions of the practitioner focusing only on what editors feel is important but at least does provide some data for the writers of press releases.

Other research surrounding press releases focuses on publication rates etc. One in particular followed the usage of hometown releases sent out by the public information office of Oklahoma State University which found that hometown ("local") releases made up 13% of all releases used by weekly newspapers, (Mitchell, 1960). In another, Morton and Warren found that newspaper circulation had a significant impact on the number of releases used: lower-circulation newspapers tended to publish more releases than the higher-circulation newspapers (Morton, 1992). One possible theory that has been used in previous research in other areas to help us to better understand the perspectives of press release writers and media editors regarding press release elements: the theory of coorientation.

Coorientational Model

McLeod and Chaffee's theory of coorientation (1967) is used to compare the thoughts and ideas of one group with those of a second group. Originally conceived to understand dyadic relationships, coorientation refers to a situation in which two (or more) individuals or groups of individuals hold opinions or knowledge about some particular cognitive object. If they communicate about the object and their views of it, they can come to understand, shape, and perhaps share one another's views. McLeod and Chaffee's (1973) coorientation model states that a person or group has varying degrees of thoughts and opinions about different things or concepts.

As seen in Figure 1, three variables or relationships constitute the coorientation model: Accuracy, agreement, and congruency. Accuracy is the extent to which one group's cognition equals what the other group thinks. Agreement indicates the degree to which each of the two groups' beliefs actually agree with the other. Perceived disagreement/agreement on the issue is congruency. McLeod and Chaffee summarize that through coorientation even "perfect communication" between two persons, totally free of constraints, would not necessarily improve agreement, and it might well reduce congruency. However, if the two are motivated to coorient, it can facilitate understanding and should always improve accuracy, even to the point where each person knows exactly what the other is thinking; this would be perfect communication in a quite literal sense (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973).
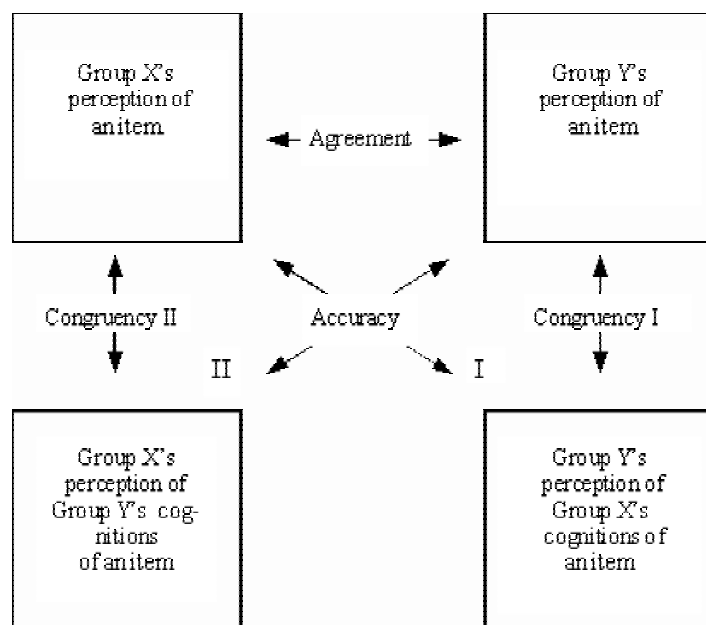
Figure 1. The Coorientation model.
Source: McLeod, J. M. & Chaffee, S. H. (1973). Interpersonal approaches to communication research. In interpersonal perception and communication. Chaffee, S. H. and McLeod, J. M. (Eds). Special edition of <u>American Behavioral Scientist,</u> 16, 483-488.

The state of these relationships are the determinants of the effects of communication. If the orientations of the two groups do not agree, their communication will likely attempt to find such agreement. As such, the two groups will either try to influence the other's views or seek information to evaluate their own group's views. Communication will be rendered highly ineffective if one group's perceptions of the other group's views are inaccurate (Grunig and Stamm 1972). Initial communication between the groups may therefore have to address this problem. While the coorientational relationships suggest the elements of effective communication between groups, the coorientation model leaves much of the effects of communication uncertain. Effective intergroup communication can improve all four communication elements (accuracy, agreement, congruency, understanding) but it frequently does not because groups often fail to agree on an issue. While agreement may not be communication's primary goal, accuracy usually is.

Traditionally, accuracy is thought to be the most important communication element in the coorientation model as it better represents the effects of communication (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973). Accuracy plays a role in understanding because accurate information allows each group to know exactly what the other group is thinking. Understanding implies that after communication, two parties may understand each other's views without necessarily agreeing on them. One or both groups may still choose to disagree. The phrase most often associated with this is "agreeing to disagree." Nonetheless, communication will improve the accuracy of the information so that both sides can understand where the other is coming from. Should the groups choose to effectively work side by side, this will allow each other to know and understand the other's needs and perspectives. Through the ability to calculate these variables (agreement, accuracy, and congruency) we may establish what type of

relationship exists between these sports professionals. But, in order to calculate these variables, one must first understand what they are.

Agreement

The fundamental relationship in a communication interaction is that of agreement. This refers to the extent that Group A and Group B have identified and evaluated a common situation, or that they each recognize the validity of the other group's concern. In short, agreement is the degree to which each of the two group's beliefs are the same as the other (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973).

Agreement between public relations practitioners and media editors is a fundamental requirement. Without a sufficient degree of agreement as to validity of a properly written press release, it is not possible to begin to develop a perception of how the other group views this communication tool. With agreement, one can assess what each group actually perceives and then compare it directly to the other group's perceptions. Agreement between practitioners and media gatekeepers must be reached in order to set a basis for effective communication.

Accuracy

Even with the existence of agreement, the perception may or may not be a fair representation of the other group's true beliefs. This is where accuracy plays a role. Accuracy is the extent to which Group A's estimates the views of Group B regarding a certain issue. (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973). If Group A's has a correct estimate of Group B's

views and vice versa, Group B has a correct estimate of Group A's views, both parties therefore have an accurate perception of each other's orientation toward an issue.

This measure will establish the level of agreement about statements between practitioners and media editors. Accuracy uncovers misconceptions about the other group's needs in regards to press release writing. Public relations practitioners will be able to discover if they have an accurate perception of what media editors would like to see as essential elements for press release writing and vice versa. It is the measurement of agreement and accuracy that will determine the two group's coorientational relationship.

Congruency

Once there is a certain degree of agreement on the issue, congruency and accuracy relationships become relevant. In developing a response to the actions of the other side, each group develops a "picture" of the other's interpretation of the issue. This picture is strongly influenced by a predisposed mental conception of the other group. Due to the fact that an open exchange of information is rarely possible, many of the uncertainties with respect to the opposite group's values, knowledge and interests are "assumed." Congruency can essentially be considered the extent to which Group A's perception of an issue is the same as its perception of Group B's cognitions about an issue (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973).

This is a very complicated measure, but in public relations studies this measure can be used to gauge the difference in self-perception and the perception of how the other group looks at an issue. Both public relations practitioners and media editors must be able to find congruency in order for press releases to benefit both parties. Currently, public relations has established guidelines as to what elements incorporate an effective press release based on

past experience and what they "assume" the needs of media editors to be. Past press release guidance has been based on the assumption that what public relations practitioners see as essential elements for press release writing is shared by media editors. If it is possible to understand what each group perceives the other group's stance on the issue of press release validity to be, then perhaps a line of communication my open up, allowing each to express those elements of press releases that can be mutually beneficial.

Coorientational Consensus / Dissensus

Researching each of these professionals must include measure of their knowledge, predispositions, and behaviors. There is much more to the relationship than just attempting to discover if the two sides agree on a topic; in this case the elements of a successful sports press release. The coorientation process represents movement from false consensus between different groups toward true consensus or dissensus. If the two sides hold accurate views of each other's positions on an issue, two types of relationships are possible. According to Broom & Dozier (1993), "True consensus occurs when both the organization AND the public actually agree and accurately perceive that agreement," (p. 38). For example, if public relations practitioners in sport and sports media editors hold similar opinions on the necessary elements of an effective press release and know that they agree, then the relationship can be described as true consensus. Dissensus, according to Broom & Dozier "occurs when there is actual disagreement that is accurately perceived," (p. 38). If for example public relations practitioners in sport and sport media editors disagree on the necessary elements of an effective press release but know that they disagree, a true state of dissensus occurs.

Mistrust and relationship breakdowns occur more frequently when there are inaccurate perceptions of the other party's view on the issue in question. If one or both sides in the relationship hold inaccurate views of the other's perceptions on an issue, two "false" states are possible. False consensus as stated by Broom & Dozier, "occurs when there is actual disagreement that is inaccurately perceived as agreement," (p. 38). If the sports media editors provide advice or tips to public relations practitioners in sport so that the sports organization may write press releases more likely to see print but then the media editors disregard those attempts due to a held bias, the media editor portrays a sense of understanding between the two parties but has its own needs etc that are not revealed. The relationship suffers as one party is misled. If the two parties actually agree on the issue but don't know it, another false state is reached. According to Broom & Dozier, "False conflict occurs when there is actual agreement that is inaccurately perceived as disagreement," (p. 38). In the research issue proposed, this may occur if the two professionals actually agree on the necessary elements required for an effective sports press release, but think that the other party disregards their individual needs. False conflict leads to mistrust and mistrust leads to difficult working relationships. Figure 2 summarizes the coorientational relationship matrix.

		Agreement	
		High	**Low**
Accuracy	**High**	**True Consensus**	**Dissensus**
	Low	**False Conflict**	**False Consensus**

Figure 2: Coorientational Relationship Matrix by Agreement and Accuracy as adapted from Broom & Dozier, (1993).

It is critical to discover where public relations practitioners in sport and sport media editors fall in this matrix. Through coorientation we may be better able to see if the two sides relate on the basis of accurately held beliefs or inaccurately held ones.

In a study that has very similar contexts as the proposed communications issue described in this paper, Chang (1996), described the conflict between the public relations practitioners who produce video news releases and television news directors who act as gate keepers of their potential usage. The study measured each group's thoughts and opinions as to what aspects make an effective VNR and what they believe the other groups opinions to be; or, as stated by McCloud and Chaffee's coorientation model: agreement, accuracy, and congruency.

Results indicated that the two groups may not be in general agreement on all aspects of VNRs. However, the results indicated that they do agree on certain points, including: VNRs are primarily story idea generators for news editors and reporters; both groups longed for some kind of code of ethics to ensure the credibility of VNRs; both groups agreed that the easier it is for a station to exercise editorial control over a VNR, the more likely the VNR is to get airplay; and finally, both groups predicted that VNRs will continue to grow. Newspeople were reluctant to admit that VNRs are helpful and they do use VNRs, but see them merely as event reminders (Chang, 1996). Further, results indicated that public relations practitioners are more motivated to work together with news directors than the other way around allowing practitioners to be more accurate in understanding what news directors prefer. Additionally, there is a large gap between what news directors and public relations agree on in regards to VNRs with perceived differences between the two groups even larger than the true differences (Chang 1996).

Research Questions

Through a research effort analyzing perceptions between public relations practitioners in sport and sport media editors three questions may be answered Answers to these questions make it possible to understand the three coorientational variables as well as the relationship between these professionals. Based on the previous literature, this study proposes the following research questions:

Research Question #1:   What are the public relations practitioners in sports' and media editors' views on the elements of an effective press release?

Research Question #2:   How does each individual group (public relations practitioners and sports news editors) perceive the opinion of the other group regarding the elements of a successful press release?

Research Question #3:   What are the coorientational relationships among these two groups?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to discover what current public relations practitioners in sport collectively identify as required elements of a successful press release and to compare these assessments with those expressed by sports news editors. Through a cross-sectional survey of these two groups of professionals, the extent to which their views are in agreement, congruent and accurate as well as the coorientational relationship between the two professionals following Chaffee and Mcleod's coorientation model was hoped to be ascertained. Because these two professional groups daily job requirements, technology is an essential component of their communication arsenal. Subsequently, it was assumed that these two professional groups are technologically savvy, therefore allowing the survey questionnaires with invitation to be directly emailed to public relations practitioners and news editors.

Sampling

This study's population was composed of PR practitioners who represent collegiate sport athletic programs and are the primary writers of sports related press releases for their respective institutions, and the sports media editors who cover college athletics and ultimately decide if those press releases will see publication.

In order to select participants from the public relations in sport field, an all inclusive list of 327 active NCAA Division I active member institutions was used. This list consists of schools within the NCAA that have Division I basketball programs, (see Appendix C for the complete list). The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is a voluntary

organization through which the nation's colleges and universities govern their athletics programs and is committed to the best interests, education and athletics participation of student-athletes, (NCAA.org, Dec 2005). A list of all active members in Division I athletics is available through the NCAA on their official website. The report provided not only includes a list of all schools, but also links to official school athletic websites, school demographics, location, and key personnel including the name and contact information for the sports information director. Division I collegiate athletic programs have been selected for several reasons. First, Division I member schools were selected for the size of their athletic programs. Division I member institutions have to sponsor at least seven sports for men and seven for women (or six for men and eight for women) with two team sports for each gender and must meet minimum attendance requirements, (NCAA.org, Dec 2005). Second, as evidenced, Division I member institutions sponsor a variety of sports for both men and women. Further, as part of a college community, it is the hope of this researcher that they may be more willing to participate in academic research. Additionally, it should be noted that basketball schools were chosen as in total, there are more basketball programs at the Division I level than football. Finally, it should be recognized that Division I member institutions represent various size cities and markets.

A formal invitation requesting participation in the study was emailed directly to the Sports Information Director (SID) at each school. A copy of the invitation letter is included as Appendix E. If that particular individual was not the primary handler or press release writing at that particular institution, they were asked to please forward the email to the individual who might be.

In order to obtain a sample for sports editors, daily newspapers from the representing cities in which a Division I member institution were selected. If two NCAA Division I institutions resided in the same city which is often the case, the daily newspaper closest regionally was used first. For the other institution that also resided in that same city, the next closest (in terms if distance) daily newspaper was used. The list of newspapers and their representative schools is available in Appendix C. Media contacts / sport editors for each individual's city's papers was obtained using the 2006 issue of *Editor and Publisher* and cross-referenced with each newspaper's online website.

Daily newspapers have been selected as this media tends to generate more amounts of news and may be more inclined to use an effective press release from its local college or university. With the daily newspapers being selected from various cities and with each of those cities having vastly ranging size of markets, a wide range of newspaper sizes was also represented. As with the Sports Information Directors, a formal invitation requesting participation in the study was directly emailed to each newspaper's sports editor.

Questionnaire

Questionnaires were initially emailed on a Wednesday morning in mid-September. This was done as it was thought the middle of the week between busy football weekends may be slightly slower. Two slightly different instruments were distributed to the two respective samples. The first questionnaire (Appendix A-Public Relations Practitioners) was distributed exclusively to the 327 Sports Information Directors where as a second questionnaire (Appendix B-News Editors) was distributed exclusively to the sports editors of 327 daily newspapers within close proximity to Division I college athletic programs.

Each questionnaire was comprised of three sections. Section 1 contained statements that aimed to measure individual perceptions about twelve news value/content and fourteen format/style elements of press releases. Respondents were asked the extent to which they agree or disagreed with the statement regarding a possible essential element in press release writing using a 5-point Likert scale; 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree. 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree. Again, please see Appendix A-Public Relations Practitioners and Appendix B-News Editors for full list of questions posed and the news value/content and format/style categorization.

Additionally, respondents were asked to rank seven selected often noted essential elements in press release writing one through seven in regards to what they believed were the most important elements with 1 being the least important and 7 being the most important. These seven selected elements included: "There exists good depth of information," "there is potential interest to the reader," "appropriate localization," "space is available," "the press release is sensitive to editorial deadlines," "the who-what-when-where-why is included," and there is a "presence of appropriate support images." Elements were selected represented various suggestions frequently occurring in typical "how-to" press release writing articles and journal entries described earlier.

Finally each respondent was given the opportunity to provide an open-ended response to any other elements that might deem necessary for a successful press release. Open ended questions were posed as the following: "Please list any other elements that you believe constitute an effective press release," "please list any other elements that you believe news editors (public relations practitioners) believe constitute and effective press release," and "other comments." Open-ended responses are available as Appendix F.

For section 2, the respondents were asked to evaluate how the other group might respond to the same statements. As in section 1, the same items using the same 5-point Likert-type scale were used. As in the end of the Section 1, respondents were also asked to rank the same seven selected elements as they perceived the opposite group would respond. Lastly, each respondent was given the opportunity to provide an open-ended response to any other elements that they felt the other profession might deem necessary for a successful press release.

Each of these first two sections was comprised of subheadings regarding commonly held press release principles: news value, content, format and style. To briefly explain, news value is exactly that, does the information have value as news? The release must be of interest to an editor and readers. The cardinal rule in release content is that the end product be newsworthy (Seitel, 1997). Content directly relates to this newsworthiness while a format of a press release consists of variables such as spacing, paper selection, margins, length etc. Finally, style of press releases is almost as critical as its content. Typical style rules include guidelines regarding appropriate capitalization, abbreviation, use of numbers and punctuation.

The last section, Section 3, consisted of various questions about participant and organizational characteristics.

Coorientational Variables

Following the coorientational model, various measurements can be made. These include measurements of the following:

Agreement

To what degree public relations practitioners and sports editors agree or disagree with 12 news value/content and 14 format/style related press release elements.

Accuracy

While accuracy has two separate sets of variables, it can be measured as the degree to which public relations practitioners (sports editors) accurately estimate the views of sports editors (public relations practitioners) regarding 12 news value/content and 14 format/style related press release elements.

It should be noted that in order to test for the research questions proposed, only agreement, and two measurements of accuracy (public relations practitioners and news editors) are required. Congruency is an internal comparison but is not included as accuracy will actually capture the required information to address the research questions proposed. These variables and relationships of agreement and accuracy can be viewed in figure 3 as they pertain to the context of this study.

Data Analysis

To enable the comparisons outlined above, independent sample t-tests will be conducted to test the differences between groups. Descriptive statistics will also be used to analyze the data. T-tests are often used by coorientation experts to analyze differences in means between two groups.

| Public relations practitioners' perceptions of what elements constitute an effective press release. | Agreement | Editors' perception of what elements constitute an effective press release. |

Congruency ⇅   Accuracy   Congruency ⇅

| Public relations practitioners' perception of what editors perceive as necessary elements of an effective press release. | | Editors' perception of what public relations practitioners perceive as necessary elements of an effective press release. |

Figure 3 – Diagram of measurements of agreement and accuracy as adapted from Chaffee and McLeod as it relates to study. Source: McLeod, J. M. & Chaffee, S. H. (1973). Interpersonal approaches to communication research. In interpersonal perception and communication. Chaffee, S. H. and McLeod, J. M. (Eds). Special edition of American Behavioral Scientist, 16, 483-488.

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CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The researcher conducted t-tests to measure agreement and accuracy on successful press release elements between public relations practitioners and news editors in sport. Congruency for the purpose of this study was omitted as accuracy and agreement are the primary determinants in discovery of coorientational relationship. The frequencies of independent variables such as previous experience and other various demographics were summarized.

Participants

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of public relations practitioners (Sports Information Directors or SIDs) and news editors in sport. In total, seventy-five SIDs and forty-four news editors in sport participated. Among the other various demographics asked for, certain similarities and differences emerged. Regarding the sex of participants, in both professional groups surveyed, the vast majority were male. In fact 93.3 percent of public relations practitioner respondents and 90.9 percent of sports editor respondents were male. While the majority of both groups were educated at least up to a baccalaureate degree (64% of public relations practitioners and 82.2% of editors), it was the public relations practitioners in sport that were far more likely to have done postgraduate work (34.7% compared to 13.3%). Various income ranges were reported but approximately three-quarters fell within either the $25,000-$50,000 and/or $50,001-$75,000. Various years of experience ranges were reported as well. Within both groups, less than 10% (2.7% for PR and 8.9% for editors)

reported to have less than 5 years of experience. Just over fifty-three percent of public

relations practitioners in sport reported having anywhere between 6-20 years of

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics of Public Relations Practitioners (SIDs) and News Editors

	PR Practitioners		Sports Editors	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Sex:				
Male	70	93.3	40	90.9
Female	5	6.7	4	9.1
Education:				
Less that HS	-	-	-	-
HS Diploma	-	-	-	-
Some College	1	1.3	2	4.4
Bachelor's Degree	48	64.0	37	82.2
Postgraduate Degree	26	34.7	6	13.3
Income:				
< $25,000 annually	1	1.3	-	-
$25,000-$50,000	29	38.7	16	36.4
$50,001-$75,000	31	41.3	16	36.4
$75,001-$100,000	10	13.3	9	19.6
> $100,000 annually	4	5.3	3	6.5
Years of Experience:				
< 5 years	2	2.7	4	8.9
6-10 years	19	25.3	9	20.0
11-15 years	12	16.0	7	15.6
16-20 years	9	12.0	11	24.4
> 21 years	33	44.0	14	31.1
Previous Experience In Media (PR only) OR PR (Editors only)				
Yes	41	54.7	17	37.8
No	34	45.3	28	62.2
Sport Represented (PR only) OR Covered (Editors only)				
Baseball	1	1.3	1	2.3
Basketball	37	49.3	5	11.6
Football	33	44.0	21	48.8
Hockey	2	2.7	-	-
Volleyball	-	-	-	-
Other	2	2.7	16	37.2
Number of Press Releases Sent (PR only) OR Received (Editors only)				
10 or less	4	5.4	1	2.2
11-20	22	29.7	2	4.3
21-30	21	28.4	4	8.9
31-40	11	14.9	3	6.7
More than 40	16	21.6	35	77.8
Paper Circulation (Editors only)				
Less than 10,000			2	4.4
10,000 to 50,000			17	37.8
More than 50,000			26	57.8

experience compared to 60% of sports editors. Forty-four percent of public relations

practitioners and 31.1% of sports editors reported having 21 or more years of experience.

When asked if they had previous experience in the opposite field (public relations

practitioners with journalism experience and sports editors with previous experience in the

public relations field) it was revealed that over half (54.7%) of public relations practitioners

had previous experience in journalism compared to only 37.8% of editors with public

relations experience.

Over ninety-three percent (93.3%) of public relations practitioner respondents

reported working primarily with football and basketball compared to 60.4% of sports editors

working those same two sports. Just over thirty-seven percent (37.2%) of sports editors

reported working with "other," sports.

When asked how many press releases each group dealt with on a monthly basis,

either received (editors) or sent (public relations practitioners), it is obvious that more are

received than sent. Only 5.4% of public relations practitioners reported only sending "less

than 10 per month," compared to 29.5% reporting "11-20," 28.4% reporting "21-30," 14.9%

reporting "31-40," and 21.6% reporting "40 or more," press releases sent per month. For the

sports editors, over seventy-seven (77.8%) reported receiving forty or more releases on a

monthly basis.

Coorientation Agreement

Research question 1 investigates the public relations practitioners in sports and sports

news editors views on the elements of an effective press release. Table 2 displays these

findings. As such, twenty-six various elements that may, (or may not) be required for a successful press release were divided into two categories: news value/content and format/style.

Within the news value/content category, the following twelve elements were proposed: "well defined reason," "focused on one central subject," "publishing benefits sender," "content is objective," "potential interest to reader," "applicability to community," "important facts are included," "who-what-when-where-why," "appropriate quotes included," "good use of sensational adjectives," "well written lead," and "good depth of information."

Within the format/style category, the following fourteen elements were proposed: "a description of org. is included," "print space is available," "composition in simple style," "inverted pyramid structure," "limited to one page," "headline creates interest," "addressed to appropriate editor," "sensitive to edit deadlines," "release packaged in a unique style," "distribution via mail," "distribution via fax," "distribution via email," "presence of support images," and "appropriate headings."

Public relations practitioners (Sports Information Directors) and sports editors showed significantly different opinions at the $p<.05$ level on six of the 12 proposed elements required for a successful press release under news value/content (see Table 2). Fifty-percent of news value/content related items were therefore disagreed upon. For the remaining 6 elements, no significant differences were detected. The items on which public relations practitioners and sports editors showed differences included "publishing benefits sender," "there is potential interest to the reader," "applicability to community," "appropriate quotes are included," "good use of sensational adjectives," and "well written lead."

TABLE 2

Agreement Between Public Relations Practitioners and News Editors Regarding Various Elements Required for a Successful Press Release.

	PR Practitioners		Sports Editors					
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig	Hi/Low
NEWS VALUE / CONTENT								
Well defined reason	4.51	.72	4.70	.51	-1.52	122	.13	HIGH
Focused on one central subject	4.16	.80	4.20	.81	-.27	121	.79	HIGH
Publishing benefits sender	4.38	.89	2.93	1.24	7.50	121	.00***	LOW
Content is objective	3.69	1.14	3.89	1.17	-.93	120	.36	HIGH
Potential interest to reader	4.37	.78	4.67	.67	-2.21	120	.03*	LOW
Applicability to community	3.99	.99	4.54	.69	-3.36	120	.00**	LOW
Important facts are included	4.82	.58	4.74	.58	.71	120	.48	HIGH
Who-what-when-where-why	4.80	.59	4.57	.89	1.78	120	.08	HIGH
Appropriate quotes included	3.78	.95	3.37	1.14	2.13	120	.04*	LOW
Good use of sensational adjectives	2.58	1.00	1.91	.94	3.65	120	.00***	LOW
Well written lead	4.37	.80	3.37	1.00	6.09	120	.00***	LOW
Good depth of information	4.21	.77	4.02	.93	1.21	120	.23	HIGH
FORMAT / STYLE								
A description of org. is included	2.74	.92	3.63	.85	-5.36	120	.00***	LOW
Print space is available	3.14	1.03	3.49	.94	-1.88	117	.06	HIGH
Composition in simple style	4.18	.83	4.07	.77	.79	120	.43	HIGH
Inverted pyramid structure	3.83	.87	3.58	1.01	1.44	119	.15	HIGH
Limited to one page	3.21	1.18	3.65	1.14	-2.03	120	.05*	LOW
Headline creates interest	4.13	.91	3.30	1.09	4.50	120	.00***	LOW
Sensitive to edit deadlines	4.37	.80	4.43	.94	-.42	120	.68	HIGH
Addressed to appropriate editor	4.13	.84	4.09	.87	.28	120	.78	HIGH
Release packaged in a unique style	2.92	.89	2.22	.87	4.27	120	.00***	LOW
Distribution via mail	1.67	1.00	2.22	1.03	-2.90	120	.05	HIGH
Distribution via fax	3.01	1.06	2.83	1.14	.92	120	.36	HIGH
Distribution via email	4.63	.67	3.89	1.02	4.85	120	.00***	LOW
Presence of support images	4.26	.87	4.26	.77	.02	120	.99	HIGH
Appropriate headings	3.08	.99	3.11	1.06	-.16	120	.88	HIGH
Mean Average	3.81		3.68					

Note.   *sig<0.05, **sig<0.01, ***sig<0.001

Public relations practitioners and sports editors showed then significantly different opinions at the p<.05 level on five of the 14 proposed elements required for a successful press release under format/style. Thirty-six percent of format/style related items were therefore disagreed upon. For the remaining 9 elements, no significant differences were detected. The items on which public relations practitioners and sports editors in sport showed differences included "description of organization is included," "limited to one page," "headlines creates interest," "release is packaged in a unique style," and "distribution via email."

This subsequently shows low agreement between these two parties regarding these six and five press release elements, respectively. Among those news value/content items that showed low agreement, editors recorded higher but not significantly different ratings on two of the six items. These included "there is potential interest to the reader," and "applicability to community." Editors therefore felt that these two items were of more importance as compared to public relations practitioners in sport. Among those format/style items that showed low agreement, editors recorded higher but not significantly different ratings again on two of the five content/style items. These included "description of organization is included," and "limited to one page." This indicates that contrary to popular thinking, results reported that more editors, compared to public relations practitioners feel that "description of organization," is an important element for a successful press release.

Table 3 then displays a full list of these press release elements categorized by their actual responses, (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Those means from 0-2.49 fell under strongly disagree/disagree. Those means reported between 2.5 and 3.49 fell under neutral

responses. Finally, those means reported between 3.5 and 5 fell under agree/strongly agree responses. Of the 26 proposed elements, (12 news value/content and 14 style/format) public relations practitioners strongly disagreed or disagreed with only one proposed elements. Sports editors in comparison, strongly disagreed or disagreed with three of the 26 proposed elements.

TABLE 3

Disagreement, Neutral, and Agreement of Various Elements Required for a Successful Press Release Among Public Relations Practitioners and News Editors.

PR Practitioners	Mean	SD	Sports Editors	Mean	SD
Strongly Disagree / Disagree			Strongly Disagree / Disagree		
Distribution via mail*	1.67	1.00	Good use of sensational adjectives	1.91	.94
			Release packaged in unique style	2.22	.87
Neutral			Distribution via mail*	2.22	1.03
Good use of sensational adjectives	2.58	1.00			
A description of org. is included	2.74	.92	Neutral		
Release packaged in unique style	2.92	.89	Distribution via fax*	2.83	1.14
Distribution via fax*	3.01	1.06	Publishing benefits sender	2.93	1.24
Appropriate headings*	3.08	.99	Appropriate headings*	3.11	1.06
Print space is available*	3.14	1.03	Headline creates interest	3.30	1.09
Limited to one page	3.21	1.18	Appropriate quotes included	3.37	1.14
			Well written lead	3.37	1.00
Agree / Strongly Agree			Print space is available*	3.49	.94
Appropriate quotes included	3.78	.95			
Content is objective*	3.69	1.14	Agree / Strongly Agree		
Inverted pyramid structure*	3.83	.87	Inverted pyramid structure*	3.58	1.01
Applicability to community*	3.99	.99	A description of org. is included	3.63	.85
Headline creates interest	4.13	.91	Limited to one page	3.65	1.14
Addressed to appropriate editor*	4.13	.84	Distribution via email*	3.89	1.02
Focused on one central subject*	4.16	.80	Content is objective*	3.89	1.17
Composition in simple style*	4.18	.83	Good depth of information*	4.02	.93
Good depth of information*	4.21	.77	Composition in simple style*	4.07	.77
Presence of support images*	4.26	.87	Addressed to appropriate editor*	4.09	.87
Potential interest to reader*	4.37	.78	Focused on one central subject*	4.20	.81
Sensitive to edit deadlines*	4.37	.80	Presence of support images*	4.26	.77
Well written lead	4.37	.80	Sensitive to edit deadlines*	4.43	.94
Publishing benefits sender	4.38	.89	Applicability to community*	4.54	.69
Well defined reason*	4.51	.72	Who-what-when-where-why*	4.57	.89
Distribution via email*	4.63	.67	Potential interest to reader*	4.67	.67
Who-what-when-where-why*	4.80	.59	Well defined reason*	4.70	.51
Important facts are included*	4.82	.58	Important facts are included*	4.74	.58
Mean Average	3.81			3.68	

* Shared opinion between groups

The only press release element that both groups strongly disagreed or disagreed was that it is best if, "the release is distributed via mail." Several noticeable differences emerge. Among those, it was reported the editors stored low neutral means regarding the press release element, "publishing of the release should benefit the sender," is required for a successful press release whereas public relations practitioners strongly agreed that that this is a needed element. Of the 26 proposed press release elements, both public relations practitioners and sports editors reported neutral scores on 7 items. Both parties shared these neutral opinions regarding three press release elements.

This left public relations practitioners agreeing or strongly agreeing with 18 of the 26 proposed elements required for a successful press release compared to editors agreeing or strongly agreeing with 16 of the 26 elements. There did not appear to be any clear cut differences between news value/content and format/style. Both public relations practitioners and the editors agreed or strongly agreed on 14 of the same elements needed for an effective press release. Eight of these items were drawn from the news value/content category with the other six from the format/style category. Among those proposed press release elements that both groups strongly agreed or agreed upon the in the news value/content category were "content is objective," "applicability to community," "well defined reason," "focused on one central subject," "potential interest to reader," "important facts are included," "who-what-when-where-why," "good depth of information." Among those proposed press release elements that both groups strongly agreed or agreed upon the in the format/style category were "inverted pyramid structure," distribution via email," "composition in a simple style," "sensitive to editorial deadlines," "addressed to appropriate editor," and "presence of support images."

It can then be stated that both public relations practitioners and editors in sport believe that press releases should be objective, have well defined reason for distribution while being focused on one central subject, have potential interest to the reader and applicability to the community, have important facts included perhaps starting with the who-what-when-where-why, have good depth of information, be composed in a simple style possibly starting with an inverted pyramid structure, be sensitive to editorial deadlines, be addressed to the appropriate editor and sent via email with the inclusion of support images.

Coorientation Agreement of Proposed Elements as Ranked

Among the previous twenty-six proposed elements for a successful release, seven were chosen by the researcher and presented to the respondents asking them to rank in order of importance. The seven press release elements that were presented included "good depth of information," "potential interest to reader," "applicability to community," "print space is available," "sensitive to edit deadlines," "who-what-when-where-why," and "presence of support images." Public relations practitioners and sports editors showed significantly different opinions at the p<.05 level on four of the 7 proposed elements required for a successful press release when asked to rank them (see Table 4). For the remaining 3 elements, no significant differences were detected. The items on which public relations practitioners and news editors in sport showed differences included "potential interest to reader," "applicability to community," "sensitivity to editorial deadlines," and "presence of support images." Of these four items, both "potential interest to reader," and "applicability to community," also showed a significance when included with the other 19 proposed press release elements. The differences among these four items indicate a low agreement (among

these four items) between the two professional groups. Public relations practitioners and sports editors' shared similar views (high agreement) on press release items, "good depth of information," "print space is available," and who-what-when-where-why."

Editors recorded higher but not significantly different ratings on 3 of the 4 items where significance was shown. These included "there is potential interest to the reader," "applicability to community," and "sensitivity to editorial deadlines." Public relations practitioners recorded higher ratings than the editors on the just "presence of support images."

TABLE 4
Agreement Between Pubic Relations Practitioners and News Editors Regarding the Ranking of Seven Selected Elements Required for a Successful Press Release.

	PR Practitioners		Sports Editors					
	Mean(r)	SD	Mean(r)	SD	t	df	Sig	Hi/Low
Good depth of information	4.71(6)	1.71	4.11(3)	1.69	1.89	120	.06	HIGH
Potential interest to reader	4.67(5)	1.85	5.70(7)	1.70	-3.06	120	.00**	LOW
Applicability to community	3.80(3)	1.40	4.46(4)	1.53	-2.42	120	.02*	LOW
Print space is available	3.36(2)	2.18	2.93(2)	1.87	1.09	120	.28	HIGH
Sensitive to edit deadlines	3.16(1)	2.18	4.65(5)	1.54	-4.07	120	.00***	LOW
Who-what-when-where-why	5.50(7)	2.14	5.09(6)	1.68	1.12	120	.27	HIGH
Presence of support images	4.43(4)	1.36	2.35(1)	1.95	6.96	120	.00***	LOW
Mean Average	4.23		4.18					

Note.   **sig<0.05, **sig<0.01, ***sig<0.001*
         (r) = ranking where 1 equals LEAST IMPORTANT and 7 equals MOST IMPORTANT

Coorientation Accuracy

Table 5 indicates public relations practitioners' estimate about the sports editors' views regarding the various elements that are needed for a successful press release. Public relations practitioners showed significantly different perceptions (at the p<.05 level) of the cognitions of sports editors (accuracy) on six of the 12 news value/content elements required for a successful press release. For the remaining 6 elements, no significant differences were detected. The items on which public relations practitioners inaccurately estimated the sports editors' views of the same press release elements as it related to news value/content included "good depth of information," "well written lead," "good use of sensational adjectives," "appropriate quotes included," "who-what-when-where-why," and "well defined reason." Public relations practitioners then showed significantly different estimates (at the p<.05 level) of the views of sports editors on ten of the 14 news format/style elements required for a successful press release. For the remaining 4 elements, no significant differences were detected. The items on which public relations practitioners inaccurately estimated the sports editors' views of the same press release elements as it related to format/style included "appropriate headings," "presence of support images," "distribution via email," "distribution via mail," "release packaged in a unique style," "addressed to appropriate editor," "headline creates interest," "inverted pyramid structure," "print space is available," and "a description of organization is included."

Public relations practitioners in sport therefore inaccurately estimated the views of sports editors 50% of the time as it related to news value and content items. Further, public relations practitioners in sport therefore inaccurately estimated the views of sports editors 71% of the time as it related to format and style press release items.

TABLE 5

Accuracy of Public Relations Practitioners' Estimate on News Editors' Views Regarding Various Elements Required for a Successful Press Release

	Mean Hi/Low	SD	Test Value	Mean Diff.	t	df	Sig	
NEWS VALUE / CONTENT								
Well defined reason	4.51	.69	4.70	-.19	-2.34	70	.02*	LOW
Focused on one central subject	4.16	.82	4.20	-.04	-.41	68	.68	HIGH
Publishing benefits sender	3.09	1.22	2.93	.16	1.07	68	.29	HIGH
Content is objective	3.81	1.17	3.89	-.08	-.56	68	.58	HIGH
Potential interest to reader	4.53	.68	4.67	-.14	-1.71	67	.09	HIGH
Applicability to community	4.38	.79	4.54	-.16	-1.72	68	.09	HIGH
Important facts are included	4.71	.64	4.74	-.03	-.39	68	.70	HIGH
Who-what-when-where-why	4.74	.63	4.57	.17	2.22	68	.03*	LOW
Appropriate quotes included	3.77	1.05	3.37	.40	3.16	68	.00**	LOW
Good use of sensational adjectives	2.17	1.06	1.91	.26	2.08	68	.04*	LOW
Well written lead	3.99	.88	3.37	.62	5.79	68	.00***	LOW
Good depth of information	4.28	.84	4.02	.26	2.54	67	.01*	LOW
FORMAT / STYLE								
A description of org. is included	2.86	1.09	3.63	-.77	-5.91	68	.00***	LOW
Print space is available	3.88	1.03	3.49	.39	3.14	67	.00**	LOW
Composition in simple style	4.26	.80	4.07	.19	1.99	68	.05	HIGH
Inverted pyramid structure	3.87	.95	3.58	.29	2.52	68	.01*	LOW
Limited to one page	3.52	1.12	3.65	-.13	-.95	68	.35	HIGH
Headline creates interest	3.61	1.17	3.30	.31	2.20	68	.03*	LOW
Sensitive to edit deadlines	4.54	.66	4.43	.11	1.35	68	.18	HIGH
Addressed to appropriate editor	4.36	.75	4.09	.27	3.03	68	.00**	LOW
Release packaged in a unique style	2.65	1.01	2.22	.43	3.55	68	.00**	LOW
Distribution via mail	1.59	.98	2.22	-.63	-5.31	67	.00***	LOW
Distribution via fax	3.06	1.03	2.83	.23	1.84	68	.07	HIGH
Distribution via email	4.67	.68	3.89	.78	9.50	68	.00***	LOW
Presence of support images	3.15	.94	4.26	-1.11	-9.82	67	.00***	LOW
Appropriate headings	4.10	.91	3.11	0.99	9.05	68	.00***	LOW
Mean Average	4.38							

Note. *sig<0.05, **sig<0.01, ***sig<0.001

Table 6 then indicates sports editors' estimates about the public relations practitioners in sports' views regarding the various elements that are needed for a successful press release. Sports editors showed significantly different estimates (at the $p<.05$ level) of the views of the public relations practitioners in sports (accuracy) on nine of the 12 news value/content elements required for a successful press release. For the remaining 3 elements, no significant differences were detected. The items on which public relations practitioners inaccurately estimated the sports editors' views of the same press release elements as it related to news value/content included "well defined reason," "focused on one central subject," "content is objective," "potential interest to reader," "important facts are included," "who-what-when-where-why," "good use of sensational adjectives," "well written lead," and "good depth of information."

Regarding format/style press release elements, sports editors showed significantly different estimates (at the $p<.05$ level) of the views of the public relations practitioners on thirteen of the 14 proposed format/style elements. For the remaining one element, no significant differences were detected. The items on which public relations practitioners inaccurately estimated the sports editors' views of the same press release elements as it related to format/style included "a description of org. is included," "print space is available," "composition in simple style," "inverted pyramid structure," "limited to one page," "headline creates interest," "addressed to appropriate editor," "sensitive to edit deadlines," "release packaged in a unique style," "distribution via mail," "distribution via email," "presence of support images," and "appropriate headings."

Of the twenty-six proposed elements needed for a successful or effective press release, there are only four elements that were accurately estimated by both professional

TABLE 6

Accuracy of News Editors' Estimate on Public Relations Practitioners' Views Regarding Various Elements Required for a Successful Press Release

	Mean	SD	Test Value	Mean Diff.	t	df	Sig	Hi/Low
NEWS VALUE / CONTENT								
Well defined reason	4.08	.94	4.51	-.43	-2.91	39	.01**	LOW
Focused on one central subject	3.40	.93	4.16	-.76	-5.18	39	.00***	LOW
Publishing benefits sender	4.53	1.03	4.38	.15	.87	37	.39	HIGH
Content is objective	2.47	1.30	3.69	-1.22	-5.82	37	.00***	LOW
Potential interest to reader	3.82	1.11	4.37	-.55	-3.07	37	.00**	LOW
Applicability to community	3.70	1.02	3.99	-.29	-1.71	36	.10	HIGH
Important facts are included	4.11	.81	4.82	-.71	-5.35	36	.00***	LOW
Who-what-when-where-why	3.95	.90	4.80	-.85	-5.85	37	.00***	LOW
Appropriate quotes included	3.58	1.03	3.78	-.20	-1.15	35	.26	HIGH
Good use of sensational adjectives	3.50	1.35	2.58	.92	4.20	37	.00***	LOW
Well written lead	3.16	.97	4.37	-1.21	-7.68	37	.00***	LOW
Good depth of information	3.61	.82	4.21	-.60	-4.53	37	.00***	LOW
FORMAT / STYLE								
A description of org. is included	4.05	1.16	2.74	1.31	6.97	37	.00***	LOW
Print space is available	2.54	1.30	3.14	-.60	-2.80	36	.01**	LOW
Composition in simple style	3.19	.91	4.18	-.99	-6.64	36	.00***	LOW
Inverted pyramid structure	2.76	.90	3.83	-1.07	-7.30	36	.00***	LOW
Limited to one page	2.70	1.22	3.21	-.51	-2.53	36	.02*	LOW
Headline creates interest	3.43	1.19	4.13	-.70	-3.56	36	.00**	LOW
Sensitive to edit deadlines	3.22	.89	4.37	-1.15	-7.92	36	.00***	LOW
Addressed to appropriate editor	3.49	.90	4.13	-.64	-4.34	36	.00***	LOW
Release packaged in a unique style	3.27	1.02	2.92	.35	2.09	36	.04*	LOW
Distribution via mail	2.65	.98	1.67	.98	6.09	36	.00***	LOW
Distribution via fax	3.14	1.03	3.01	.13	.74	36	.47	HIGH
Distribution via email	4.08	.80	4.63	-.55	-4.20	36	.00***	LOW
Presence of support images	3.19	.95	4.26	-1.07	-6.72	35	.00***	LOW
Appropriate headings	4.03	.91	3.08	.95	6.25	35	.00***	LOW
Mean Average	3.45							

Note.   *sig<0.05, **sig<0.01, ***sig<0.001

groups. Only the proposed elements "distribution via fax," "applicability to community," "appropriate quotes included," and "publishing benefits sender," were accurately estimated by both parties. Only one of these items falls under format/style ("distribution via fax") with the other being news value/content related. Stated otherwise, twenty-two instances were reported where at least one professional group, public relations practitioners and/or sports editors inaccurately estimated the views of the opposite group.

Again, Table 5 and 6 indicate both public relations practitioners' and sports editors' estimates about opposite groups' views regarding the various elements that are needed for a successful press release. Public relations practitioners showed significantly different estimates (at the $p<.05$ level) of the views of sports editors (accuracy) on sixteen of the 26 proposed elements required for a successful press release (6 of 12 news value/content and 10 of 14 format/style). Sports editors the showed significantly different estimates (at the $p<.05$ level) of the views of the public relations practitioners in sports (accuracy) on twenty-two of the 26 proposed elements required for a successful press release 9 of 12 news value/content and 13 of 14 format style).

Of the proposed elements as they relate to news value/content, public relations practitioners in sport inaccurately assessed 50% of the views of sports editors. This compared to 71% of the elements as they relate to format/style. In turn, of the proposed elements, sports editors inaccurately assessed 75% of the news value/content views of public relations practitioners and 93% of the format/style views of the public relations practitioners.

Coorientation Accuracy of Proposed Elements as Ranked

Similar to the ranking that was requested in section 1 of the questionnaire, section 2 asked the respondent to rank the same seven selected press release elements as they believed the opposite professional group would rank them.

Accuracy is then determined as it relates to ranking items. Table 7 indicates both the public relations practitioners in sports' estimates about the sports editors' views regarding the ranking of the seven selected elements needed for a successful press release in order of importance as well as the sports editors' estimates about the public relations practitioners' views regarding the ranking of the seven selected elements needed for a successful press release in order of importance.

Public relations practitioners showed significantly different estimates (at the p<.05 level) of the views of the sports editors (accuracy) on six of the seven elements that were ranked. For the remaining element, no significant difference was detected. In this case, the only item on which public relations practitioners accurately estimated the sports editors' view in regards to ranking of the press release elements was, "who-what-when-where-why."

Sports editors showed significantly different estimates (at the p<.05 level) of the views of the public relations practitioners (accuracy) on five of the seven elements that were ranked. For the remaining elements, no significant differences were detected. In this case, the only two items on which sports editors accurately estimated the public relations practitioners' views in regards to ranking of the press release elements was, "sensitive to edit deadlines," and "good depth of information."

TABLE 7

Accuracy Between Public Relations Practitioners and News Editors Regarding the Ranking of Seven Selected Elements Required for a Successful Press Release.

PR Practitioners	Mean(r)	SD	Test Value	Mean Diff.	t	df	Sig	Hi/Low
Good depth of information	4.60(6)	1.77	4.11	.49	2.30	67	.03*	LOW
Potential interest to reader	4.57(5)	2.20	5.70	-1.13	-4.22	67	.00***	LOW
Applicability to community	3.87(2)	1.45	4.46	-.59	-3.38	67	.00**	LOW
Print space is available	4.15(3)	1.95	2.93	1.22	5.15	67	.00***	LOW
Sensitive to edit deadlines	3.18(1)	2.34	4.65	-1.47	-5.20	67	.00***	LOW
Who-what-when-where-why	5.18(7)	1.78	5.09	.09	.40	67	.69	HIGH
Presence of support images	4.44(4)	1.95	2.34	2.09	8.84	67	.00***	LOW
Mean Average	4.28							

News Editors in Sport	Mean(r)	SD	Test Value	Mean Diff.	t	df	Sig	Hi/Low
Good depth of information	4.92(5)	1.57	4.71	.21	.79	35	.44	HIGH
Potential interest to reader	5.42(7)	1.90	4.67	.75	2.35	35	.02*	LOW
Applicability to community	4.42(4)	1.46	3.80	.62	2.53	35	.02*	LOW
Print space is available	2.56(1)	1.80	3.36	-.80	-2.69	35	.01*	LOW
Sensitive to edit deadlines	3.19(2)	1.47	3.16	.03	.14	35	.89	HIGH
Who-what-when-where-why	4.97(6)	1.54	5.50	-.53	-2.06	35	.05*	LOW
Presence of support images	3.36(3)	2.07	4.43	-1.07	-3.10	35	.00**	LOW
Mean Average	4.12							

Note. *sig<0.05, **sig<0.01, ***sig<0.001*

(r) = ranking where 1 equals LEAST IMPORTANT and 7 equals MOST IMPORTANT

Coorientational Relationships

The coorientation process represents movement from false consensus between different groups toward true consensus or dissensus. Four potential relationships are possible and all are dependent on the two coorientational dimensions of agreement and accuracy. These include, true consensus, dissensus, false consensus, and false conflict. The described relationships are portrayed in Table 8.

TABLE 8
Coorientational Relationships Between Public Relations Practitioners and Editors Regarding Elements Required for a Successful Press Release.

News Value/Content = nv/c Format/Style = f/s		AGREEMENT	PR Pract ACCURACY	News Edit ACCURACY	REL.
Distribution via fax	f/s	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	True Consensus
Publishing benefits sender	nv/c	LOW	HIGH	HIGH	Dissensus
Applicability to community	nv/c	LOW	HIGH	HIGH	Dissensus
Potential interest to reader	nv/c	LOW	HIGH	LOW	False Consensus*
Appropriate quotes included	nv/c	LOW	LOW	HIGH	False Consensus*
Good use of sensational adjectives	nv/c	LOW	LOW	LOW	False Consensus
Well written lead	nv/c	LOW	LOW	LOW	False Consensus
A description of org. is included	f/s	LOW	LOW	LOW	False Consensus
Limited to one page	f/s	LOW	HIGH	LOW	False Consensus*
Headline creates interest	f/s	LOW	LOW	LOW	False Consensus
Release packaged in a unique style	f/s	LOW	LOW	LOW	False Consensus
Distribution via email	f/s	LOW	LOW	LOW	False Consensus
Appropriate headings	f/s	LOW	LOW	LOW	False Consensus
Well defined reason	nv/c	HIGH	LOW	LOW	False Conflict
Focused on one central subject	nv/c	HIGH	HIGH	LOW	False Conflict*
Content is objective	nv/c	HIGH	HIGH	LOW	False Conflict*
Important facts are included	nv/c	HIGH	HIGH	LOW	False Conflict*
Who-what-when-where-why	nv/c	HIGH	LOW	LOW	False Conflict
Good depth of information	nv/c	HIGH	LOW	LOW	False Conflict
Print space is available	f/s	HIGH	LOW	LOW	False Conflict
Composition in simple style	f/s	HIGH	HIGH	LOW	False Conflict*
Inverted pyramid structure	f/s	HIGH	LOW	LOW	False Conflict
Sensitive to edit deadlines	f/s	HIGH	HIGH	LOW	False Conflict*
Addressed to appropriate editor	f/s	HIGH	LOW	LOW	False Conflict
Distribution via mail	f/s	HIGH	LOW	LOW	False Conflict
Presence of support images	f/s	HIGH	LOW	LOW	False Conflict
RANKINGS					
Print space is available	f/s	HIGH	LOW	LOW	False Conflict
Good depth of information	nv/c	HIGH	LOW	HIGH	False Conflict*
Who-what-when-where-why	nv/c	HIGH	HIGH	LOW	False Conflict*
Potential interest to reader	nv/c	LOW	LOW	LOW	False Consensus
Applicability to community	nv/c	LOW	LOW	LOW	False Consensus
Sensitive to edit deadlines	f/s	LOW	LOW	HIGH	False Consensus*
Presence of support images	f/s	LOW	LOW	LOW	False Consensus

QUANTITY OF RELATIONSHIPS (News Value/Content)

	Frequency	Percentage
True Consensus	0	0%
Dissensus	2	17%
False Conflict	6	50%
False Consensus	4	33%

QUANTITY OF RELATIONSHIPS (Fmt/Style)

	Frequency	Percentage
True Consensus	1	7%
Dissensus	0	0%
False Conflict	7	50%
False Consensus	6	43%

QUANTITY OF RELATIONSHIPS (Rankings)

	Frequency	Percentage
False Conflict	3	43%
False Consensus	4	53%

indicates a difference in accuracy among the two professional groups (low therefore assumed)

Of the 26 total proposed elements required for a successful press release, true consensus was reported only once, dissensus only twice, false conflict was reported thirteen times and false consensus each was reported ten times.

Within false conflict, 6 of the 13 items fell under the news value/content category with the remaining 7 under format/style. Within false consensus, 4 of the 10 items fell under the news value/content category with the remaining 6 under format/style.

Among the proposed press release elements and rankings, false conflict was reported again in 50% of both news value/content and format/style related press release items. Here, half of the time, the two parties actually agree on the necessity of the element proposed as a requirement for a successful press release but are not aware of that agreement. In this case, actual agreement has been inaccurately estimated as disagreement.

False consensus was then reported in 33% of news value/content and 43% of format/style related press release items. Here, the two parties disagree on the necessity of the element proposed as a requirement for a successful press release but actually inaccurately perceive that they are in agreement.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Significance and Practical Applications

By examining levels of agreement and accuracy, one can find the type of coorientational relationship displayed by the two groups as it relates to the issue addressed. If the orientations of the two groups do not agree, their communication will likely attempt to find such agreement. As such, the two groups will either try to influence the other's views or seek information to evaluate their own group's views. If one group's perceptions of the other group's views are inaccurate, communication is rendered ineffective. The states of these relationships are determinants on the effects of communication.

Sharing Views on Elements of a Successful Press Release

The fundamental relationship in a communication interaction is that of agreement (Broom & Dozier, 1993). In short, agreement is the degree to which each of the two group's beliefs are the same as the other.

Among news value/content press release elements, both the public relations practitioners and sports editors agreed that several of the elements proposed were in fact important components of a successful press release. Both parties for instance agreed that the press release should have a "well define reason" for distribution, the release should "be focused on one central subject," have "potential interest to the reader," be "applicable to the community," have "important facts included," report the "who-what-when-where-why," and have a "good depth of information."

Both the public relations practitioners and sports editors disagreed on only 1 news value/content element together; a press release should have a "good use of sensational adjectives." It can then be assumed that both public relations practitioners and sports editors therefore have no use for superlative words or phrases but instead, facts and quality information should drive the release. This is supported in an open-ended response when one public relations practitioner noted that a public relations professional must, *"Know the target audience to get the message of the release across…and prepare the release as organized, concise, and not a bunch of editorializing or superlatives."*

However, the public relations practitioners and sports editors held different opinions regarding the news value/content press release elements stating that a press release should have a "well written lead," and that "publishing the press release should benefit the sender." Public relations practitioners agreed that a well written lead is important while the sports editors were neutral. This most certainly can be attributed to the fact that public relations practitioners feel that the lead is important to grab the editors' attention while the editors feel that the writing of the story, including the beginning is part of their job duties. Further public relations practitioners strongly agreed that the "publishing of the release should benefit the sender," where as sport editors disagreed. Obviously, editors have no concern about whether or not the publishing of the press release will benefit the sender as they are assuredly more concerned with the interests of the reader. This reader/subscriber concern is evident in the level of agreement regarding several of the proposed press release elements.

It is interesting to note that editors recorded higher level of agreement (means) with the news value/content press release elements, "potential interest to reader," and "applicability to community." While public relations practitioners agreed, the level with

which editors responded was higher. Taking this into account while also revealing that public relations practitioners held higher agreement levels (means) with regards to the press release elements that "important facts are included," the "who-what-when-where-why" is available, there is a "presence of appropriate quotes," there exists a good depth of information," and there is a "well written lead," reveals two different purposes or functions for the press release. Public relations practitioners use the press release as a communication means. As such, publication of the press release is the only way in which this communication can take place. In order to receive publication consideration, grabbing the attention of the editors is critical. Well written press releases that have the required facts and depth of information is thus vital. In open-ended comments, this was supported. One public relations practitioner emphasized the need to create attention by stating that a press release needs, *"an early "grabber" and should cover the five W's, but also have that one fact early that piques interest."*

Sports editors in comparison appear to be more concerned with the press release not in terms of being read, but rather as it relates to readership. The press release has to be not important to the editor per say, but important to the reader. They take on a more traditional journalistic role of serving the community.

Among the other news value/content elements that editors showed higher agreement levels (means) included the release having a "well defined reason," and it being, "focused on one central subject." It becomes apparent that because of the sheer volume of press releases that editors see on a regular basis (77.8% reported receiving more than 40 on a monthly basis), that they prefer press releases that essentially do not waste their time. Because of this volume, they would like to see releases that have purpose and focus.

Editors in general, appear to be less concerned with the content (although they do report means indicating levels of agreement) as compared to public relations practitioners. This is most likely attributed to the journalistic role that editors play. The press release's purpose to editors is then to grab attention and present information about a topic. Editors then feel that it is their job to do the writing. One public relations practitioner understood this when he stated in an open-ended response that the topic and release should, *"draw editors in to write a separate story on the topic."*

Among the format and style press release elements, a higher overall level of agreement was reported. Public relations practitioners in sport and sports editors essentially held the similar views on 60% of the format/style elements. While initially, the higher percentage of agreement regarding format and style seems significant, upon reflection, its reasons may be apparent. All format and style press release elements by many are considered universal. Format and style are essentially the components making up standard press release writing practice.

When one examines which particular elements both parties agree are essential to a successful press release and which particular elements both parties view as unnecessary to a successful press release several interesting observations can be made.

First, both parties agree that a press release should be "composed in a simple style," be "sensitive to editorial deadlines," be "addressed to the appropriate editor," that press releases are best distributed via email," and that the "presence of support images" is important. On the opposite end of the spectrum, but parties essentially agree (by disagreeing with the proposed elements) that a press release should not be "packaged in a unique style," be "distributed via mail" or be "distributed via fax."

If we take a closer look at those elements that both agree are essential for a successful press release, it become apparent again that simplicity and professional courtesy are important. Both public relations practitioners in sport and sports editors believe in a simple style but notably both understand that it is important to take into account the needs of the editor by being sensitive to deadlines and finding the appropriate addressee. The editors in turn apparently appreciate this professional courtesy. One editor in an open-ended response noted this when stating, *"sensitivity to deadline is important, obviously, however proper lead time is also important if said release is desired to have an impact (i.e. awareness/attendance at events)."*

Next, if we take one particular element that both parties agree is a required element for a successful press release ("distribution via email"), and compare that to the three format/style elements that both professional parties disagree are required elements for a successful press release, ("packaged in a unique style," "distributed via mail" and "distributed via fax"), additional interesting observations can be made. It thus becomes apparent that the preferred means of press release distribution currently is email. The era of the mailed press release seemingly seems to have passed. This is supported by the very low means reported. In much the same way although to a slightly lesser extent, both parties also feel that the fax is no longer an efficient way to distribute a press release. Public relations practitioners prefer the method even more strongly than do editors. This may be due to two distinct reasons. First, because again of the sheer volume of press releases received on a monthly basis, editors are less enthusiastic about the communication tool as a whole. One editor in an open-ended response stated, *"I am not a big fan of press releases due to the large volume of meaningless missives I receive."* This is supported as all three proposed

distribution means (mail, fax and email) among editors are reported at 3.89 (neutral) or

lower. Second, for the public relations practitioner, distributing a press release via email is

easier. The technology allows with one click of a button a press release ready with copy

ready images to be sent to a large number of sports editors in any or all parts of the country.

It should be noted here that in the open ended responses, several public relations

mentioned another technology as perhaps a more important method of information

distribution: the website.

> *"With the explosion of the internet, press releases have become more than just a way to alert the media to what is happening. We treat our website as our own daily newspaper so even if the release isn't printed or used by any external outlets, it still serves a valuable purpose by being posted on our own outlet that fans, alumni and even media use."* We send out (via e-mail) 11-20 in football but the most important item for us is to get our info on the web. We are now our own media avenue. Bios, quotes, notes, stats (the veritable plethora of stats and notes) seems to drive us. Our web site has become the 'face' of our athletic dept.

> *"University run websites are emerging as a driving force for placement of press releases, since the news hole for sports sections continues to shrink and newspapers are curtailing their staff resources for on-site coverage of sports. As a whole, I believe more SIDs are writing for their websites, not with the outside media in mind."*

> *"With the explosion of the internet, press releases have become more than just a way to alert the media to what is happening. We treat our website as our own daily newspaper so even if the release isn't printed or used by any external outlets, it still serves a valuable purpose by being posted on our own outlet that fans, alumni and even media use."*

> *"Using a web site almost precludes issuing press releases. We're coming to believe this: why would be issue a release that A) a news entity might immediately post on its web site when B) we can do so first? Hence, many of the editors and people who have an interest in covering our sports find the information presented as news to begin with -- not as a behind-the-scenes press release."*

While this trend may make life easier to the public relations practitioners, it most

certainly has its downside. The trend of sending a news release that directs media to a web

site for details requires the reporter/editor to call to find out the rest of who-what-when-

where-why, with the "how" part even more difficult to discover; the downside might be that the harder a public relations practitioner makes the sports editor work, the less likely a busy sports editor will find the time to fill in the holes of the news release making the odds of the release being published, non-existent.

Regarding another individual format and style elements, when anticipating the response for the press release element that a "description of the organization is included," it was presumed that public relations practitioners would certainly feel that this was a more important press release elements as compared to sports editors. In fact, the opposite was reported. Sports editors recorded a higher means relating to the press release element. One reason for this is that public relations practitioners may assume that the news media should already be familiar with the local or regional college institution. Editors in turn, perhaps in light that this piece of information is rarely included in any printing of a press release, reported neutral findings

While agreement may not be communication's primary goal, accuracy usually is. Even with agreement on an issue, the perception may or may not be a fair representation of the other group's true beliefs.

Understanding Each Other's Views

Overall, public relations practitioners in sport inaccurately estimated the views of sports editors 50% of the time as it related to news value and content items compared to sports editors inaccurate estimate of public relations practitioners regarding 75% of the news value/content elements. Further, public relations practitioners in sport inaccurately estimated the views of sports editors 71% of the time as it related to format and style press release

items compared to sports editors inaccurate assessment of 93% of the format/style views of the public relations practitioners. In both cases, editors show higher inaccuracy regarding the perceptions of public relations practitioners in sport.

While it is safe to assume neither party has a real accurate picture of the other's cognitions, editors may have even less awareness. One contributing factor to this could be previous experience. Over half of the public relations practitioners surveyed (54%) reported having previous work experience in the media while only 37.8% of sports editors reported having experience in the public relations industry. Previous experience as journalists themselves certainly gives public relations practitioners' better insight into the needs of sports editors. In turn, the lack of working public relations knowledge coupled with the negative perceptions of public relations in general apparently create large gaps in perception. Prior research has consistently identified the mistrust and conflict characterizing the journalist-public relations relationship, particularly from the journalist's perspective. In order to bridge this divide, we must examine what press release elements specifically are accurately or inaccurately perceived.

Sports editors inaccurately estimated the cognitions of public relations practitioners regarding press release elements on nine out of twelve news value and content related items. Public relations practitioners in turn, inaccurately perceived the cognitions of sports editors on six out of twelve news value and content related.

The only correctly estimated elements by sports editors included, that "publishing the press release should benefit the sender," that the release should be "applicable to the community," and that "appropriate quotes should be included." Remember, by accurately perceiving the views of the public relations practitioner, the editors are not stating that he or

she agrees with the press release element but rather that they have an accurate picture of how the public relations practitioner views that same element. For example, regarding the element "publishing the press release should benefit the sender," sports editors accurately assessed that public relations practitioners would rate this relatively high (mean of 4.38), but the sports editors themselves however rated this press release element significantly lower (mean of 2.93). It can be assumed then actual disagreement is taking place that is accurately perceived. The two groups are essentially "agreeing to disagree."

When examining the individual news value/content related press release items as they related to accuracy individually, several observations emerge. In examining the mean difference and the individual news value/content press release items, both public relations practitioners and sports editors can either "overvalue," or "undervalue" the various press release elements. By "overvaluing," a press release element, they rate their perception of the other professional groups' opinion of the importance of the press release higher than how that group actually feels. By "undervaluing," a press release element, they rate their perception of the other professional groups' opinion of the importance of the press release lower than how that group actually feels.

By "overvaluing" something, the professional group places more value on a certain issue, in this case a press release element than is absolutely necessary. If constructive professional communication were to take place, the opposing groups could better learn which elements are important to each group. Public relations practitioners for example highly "overvalued" (> .1 mean diff) the "presence of appropriate quotes," the "good use of sensational adjectives," the presence of a "well written lead," having "good depth of information," that the "publishing will benefit the sender," and that the "who-what-when-

where-why," should be included. It becomes apparent then that the need for a press release that has a well written lead, good depth of information, including sensational adjectives and appropriate quotes that benefit the sender is not as important to editors as PR professionals believe.

Perhaps then, because of this "overvaluing," the press release's true role is grabbing the attention of the editor encouraging the journalist to write his or her own story about the topic of the sent press release. The press release perhaps then is more heavily used by editors as starting points for story writing. They feel that is their job to develop appropriate unbiased quotes, develop the lead and provide the correct amount of depth in regards to information. One editor in an open-ended response supports this thought as it specifically relates to the "overvaluing" of appropriate quotes when he/she stated , *Instead of quotes in the release, it should explain availability of source."*

Editors in comparison only overvalued two press release elements. These were that the "publishing will benefit the sender," and have a "good use of sensational adjectives." While it is true that the public relations practitioner does in fact want the press release to be published for certainly selfish reasons, the editors "overvalue" this element perhaps because of preconceived negative feeling toward the public relations industry. Editors essentially feel that the public relations practitioner is solely selfish in its intent and has no regard for the media's readership.

Sports editors, perhaps because of either a lack of experience in the public relations field or just a general distaste for the field in general "undervalued" ten of the 12 news value/content press release elements. The ten total items were "undervalued" by and average of (-) 0.68. The only two news value/content items NOT "undervalued" were that it's

"publishing benefits sender," and there should be a "good use of sensational adjectives." Editors by "undervaluing" such a large number of news value and content related items are essentially stating that the public relations practitioners are disregarding their needs as it relates to the press release. While public relations practitioners do in fact place a great deal of importance on the elements in question, sports editors do not feel that they do. Communication between parties is important then to shorten these perception gaps whereby both parties can benefit from a well executed press release.

As accuracy relates to format and style of a press release, sports editors inaccurately estimated the views of public relations practitioners regarding press release elements on thirteen out of fourteen format and style related items (93%). Public relations practitioners in turn, inaccurately estimated the views of sports editors on ten out of the fourteen format and style related items (71%).

What then can be the cause of such poor accuracy? Two open-ended responses, one representing each party may give us a clue. One editor when asked about the perceptions of public relations practitioners (Sports Information Directors) responded, *"Sorry but I am not an SID and don't care to pretend to think like one."*

A Sports Information Director or SID when asked about the perceptions of sports editors responded, *"My job is to publicize my institution through the accomplishments of its athletics teams. While I cannot ignore the realities within which editors operate, I do not devote my limited cognitive ability to the imaginative identification required here."*

If these feelings are shared among other colleagues in their respective industries, then it could be stated that the high levels on inaccuracy can be attributed to apathy; they simply don't care. At this point, they do not properly see how their relationship is, or can be,

mutually beneficial. It is through communication about each other's needs that this occurs.

For example, one sports editor has reportedly taken in upon his or herself to educate public

relations professionals as to the realities of the editor,

> *"I receive dozens of news releases each day. Over the years, I have taken it upon myself to tutor via e-mail/phone/meetings several new-to-the-profession public relations and sports information professionals. I did so because these professionals in public relations agencies or sports information departments sent me such awful news releases that I was embarrassed for them. Some veteran PR/SID pros could use some tutoring, too; and, of course, I had selfish reasons: I didn't want to have to keep receiving such unprofessional, almost incomprehensible material and figured others in my profession would agree."*

By examining the "overvalue" and "undervalue" concepts as they relate to format and

style press release elements, we can again see several interesting observations. In total,

public relations practitioners tended to "overvalue" more of the format and style press release

elements while sports editors tended to "undervalue" those same elements. These

"overvalued" (PR) and "undervalued" (editors) items include the belief that "print space must

be available," that the release should be "composed in a simple style," have an "inverted

pyramid structure," that the "headline should create interest," the release should be "sensitive

to editorial deadlines," be "addressed to the appropriate editor," and be distributed via

email." Public relations practitioners therefore, place too much emphasis on these elements

compared to the editors' views. Public relations practitioners must then find a common

ground with sports editors. How much emphasis should one place on the elements in

questions? To answer this, let us examine some of the individual format and style elements

individually as they relate to accuracy.

Regarding the press release element that "print space is available," an outsider may

assume that this (print space availability) would in fact be an important piece of whether a

press release is successful in finding its way to publication. Apparently it is not, as both parties rated this at neutral or below in regards to their own agreement and both rated this element at neutral or below when asked about the views of the other. So essentially, if a press release is written well and has a topic that grabs the attention of the editor, space can be made.

In terms of the press release elements that a release should be "composed in a simple style," it should be in an "inverted pyramid structure, be "limited to one page," that the "headline should create interest," be "sensitive to editorial deadlines," and be "addressed to the appropriate editors," editors inaccurately perceived the cognitions of public relations practitioners by an average of (-)0.84. Editors are stating that they believe that these particular press release elements are nearly a full agreement level below about how public relations practitioners actually feel about them. Public relations practitioners do invest importance on these elements contrary to the editors' perceptions. Again we see evidence that editors have a negative view of the public relations view as it relates to items that make the life of the editor easier. Public relations practitioners on three of these elements accurately perceived the cognitions of the sports editors. Public relations practitioners therefore do seem to have at least some idea of the needs of sports editors without the editors' knowledge or disbelief of it.

The proposed press release elements that deal with the distribution of the press release: "packaged in a unique style," "distributed via mail," "distributed via fax," and "distributed via email," also revel interesting accuracy findings. Essentially, both parties (public relations practitioners and sport editors) are not touch with one another's preference for both distributing and/or receiving a press release. While they both agree that mail is not

an efficient way to distribute a press release, and that it does not need to be distributed in a unique style to be effective, they do not recognize that agreement and subsequently inaccurately estimate the views of the other party. This is an agreement that is inaccurately viewed. By opening up lines of communication regarding the best and preferred means of press release distribution, the two parties can easily fill the gap in accuracy. These types of false states are easily fixed.

Both public relations practitioners and sports editors presented similar inaccurate perceptions as it related to the presence of support images. Both parties perceived the cognitions of the other group to be lower that actual agreement levels. The two groups essentially then believe that the other placed less value on the presence of support images than they actually do. Both public relations practitioners and sports editors feel the presence of support images is an important part of any successful press release but do not recognize that the other professional feels the same way. In fact, both feel that the other disregards this element as a required component of a successful press release. Again, by pointing out this inaccurately assessed actual agreement, they may both realize that the presence of such images is important to include as a public relations practitioner, and are appreciated in the final press release product as an editor.

What may be more telling amongst agreement and accuracy findings is the ability of the two to establish a coorientational relationship. It is the measurement of agreement and accuracy that will determine the two group's coorientational relationship. By understanding this relationship, we can strategize what type of communication is needed to tear down long established professional wall between groups. As in reality, both groups share a common goal: the reading eyes of the community.

What is the Relationship?

Discovery of the relationship characterized by the perceptions of each individual group will provide a foundation to build more constructive future relationships. True consensus, dissensus, false consensus and false conflict relationships then need to be addressed.

In the case of this study, the public relations practitioners in sport and sports media editors hold similar opinions on the necessary elements of an effective press release and know that they agree, then the relationship can be described as true consensus. Interestingly, among all proposed press release elements both parties were presented with, this relationship (true consensus) occurred only once. Both professional groups agreed that distribution of a press release via fax was not essential to its success and both professional groups accurately assessed the other professional group would feel the same way. It should also be noted that this true consensus relationship takes place regarding a format/style element. This element specifically may have true consensus because both parties agree that mail (although inaccurately assessed) is not the preferred distribution. This perceptions coupled with the finding that both parties are not 100% sure that all press releases should be distributed via email which is evident in yet another low accuracy value leaves the fax in the middle.

Dissensus, in the context of this study occurs when public relations practitioners in sport and sport media editors disagree on the necessary elements of an effective press release but know that they disagree. Alternately stated, the two parties "agree to disagree." Dissensus between public relations practitioners and sports editors occurred only twice and both items related to news value/content. The press release elements, that the "publishing of the release should benefit the sender," and that the release should be "applicable to the

community," were disagreed upon by both public relations practitioners and sport editors.

Public relations practitioners quite naturally felt that the publishing of a press release should

in fact benefit the sender while the sports editors disagree or simply do not care if the release

benefits the sender. The editor is far more concerned about the applicability of the release to

the community and thus potential readership. It should be noted that public relations

practitioners did acknowledge that "applicability" to the community is an important piece of

a press release, the degree to which they supported the element did not match the level in

which the editors agreed with its importance. What is more important to note however, is

that even though both disagreed, they know they disagree. Editors are willing to admit

acknowledge that a press release and its subsequent publication benefit the sender and this is

an essential element for public relations practitioners to include in a press release. They

(editors) however don't care. They essentially agree to disagree. Further, while both

acknowledge that the applicability is important in a press release; they also both

acknowledge that it is more important to the sports editor. What is important to the public

relations practitioner is that the release in some form sees print. What is important then to

the editor is not that the release will see print, but rather will the reader of the print media be

drawn to it; will they actually read it.

Both of these "true" states require little attention in regards to communication

because accuracy levels are high. They know and understand each other's views. Only

when inaccurately estimating the other's needs, wants and views does communication

become vital. Unfortunately for the two parties in question, nearly 90% of the proposed

elements are in some way falsely estimated.

Mistrust and relationship breakdowns occur more frequently when there are inaccurate estimates of the other party's view on the issue in question. If one or both sides in the relationship hold inaccurate views of the other's perceptions on an issue, two "false" states are possible. Those false states are false consensus and false conflict. It is these two false states that dominate the relationship type(s) among public relations practitioners and sports editors.

"False consensus typically occurs when there is actual disagreement that is inaccurately perceived as agreement," (Broom & Dozier, 1993, p. 39). Here the two parties think they agree when in actuality, they do not. In the context of this study, ten total press release elements, (4 news value/content and 6 format/style) fell under this relationship. There seems to be no particular relationship in which news value/content or format/style press release elements align directly with.

Those press release elements that fall under a false consensus relationship include, "potential interest to reader," "appropriate quotes included," "good use of sensational adjectives," "well written lead," "a description of org. is included," "limited to one page," "release packaged in a unique style," "headline creates interest," "distribution via email," and "appropriate headings." Among these elements, there exists low agreement and it is inaccurately perceived by the other party. One possible explanation of this relationship is if the sports media editors provide advice or tips to public relations practitioners in sport so that the sports organization may write press releases more likely to see print; but then the media editors disregard those attempts due to a held bias, the media editor portrays a sense of understanding between the two parties but has its own needs etc that are not revealed. The relationship suffers as one party is misled. This could certainly occur in reverse as well.

If the two parties actually agree on the issue but don't know it, another false state is reached: false conflict. In the context of this study, thirteen total press release elements, (6 news value/content and 7 format/style) fell under this relationship. Again, there appears to be no particular relationship in which news value/content or format/style press release elements align directly with.

Those press release elements that fall under a false consensus relationship include a "well defined reason," "focused on one central subject," "content is objective," "important facts are included," "who-what-when-where-why," "good depth of information," "print space is available," "composition in simple style," "inverted pyramid structure," "sensitive to edit deadlines," "addressed to appropriate editor," "distribution via mail," and "presence of support images." Among these elements, there exists actual agreement about the particular press release elements place in a successful press release, but again, it is inaccurately perceived by the other party.

False conflict leads to mistrust and mistrust leads to difficult working relationships. In the research issue proposed, this may occur if the two professionals actually agree on the necessary elements required for an effective sports press release, but think that the other party disregards their individual needs. This potential disregard is assuredly perpetuated by previous miscommunication and preconceived negative feeling on behalf of both parties. Regardless of topic, there is a long-established notion that there is an adversarial relationship between the media and public relations professionals (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986). The relationship between the media and public relations is a tenuous one; it exists more out of necessity rather than choice. Many public relations professionals have a negative perception of media practitioners, and vice versa. Effective media relations is an ongoing give and take

process that, over time, gives both organizations what each needs. It is then critical to open up lines of communication to determine what in fact each party prefers regarding press release usage.

It is essential to discover where public relations practitioners in sport and sport media editors fall in this matrix. Through coorientation we may be better able to see if the two sides relate on the basis of accurately held beliefs or inaccurately held ones. By effectively identifying the relationship, strategies can be put in place to improve the dynamic of the relationship.

In true consensus and dissensus, the two sides relate on the basis of accurately held perceptions of the other's views. In the case of dissensus, one or both professional groups could develop strategies for changing their own or the other's positions on the issue in order to improve the relationship. In the cases of false consensus and false conflict, however, strategies developed on the basis of inaccurate perceptions of the other's views would not be appropriate.

Relationships that are based on inaccurate perceptions call for public relations objectives that use coorientational variables as outcome criteria. For example, a public relations practitioners finding of false conflict should lead to an informational program strategy designed to improve the accuracy of the sports editors' perceptions. If false consensus was discovered showing levels of low agreement, then the program strategy should be aimed to try to change views held by both sides in the relationship. It may even be possible that an appropriate strategy can be developed as a persuasive effort to change one party's views to make them more closely match their own. Both internal and external strategies can be developed to improve the accuracy of each side's views of the other's

perceptions, as well as to increase levels of agreement. In general, the overall goal is to improve the relationship between public relations practitioners in sport and sport media editors by not only changing what people know and how they feel about an issue and each other, but by increasing their accuracy of their perceptions of each other's views all of which lead to more effective working relationships.

Limitations and Implications for Future Study

Results of this study might have been affected by sample size and response rate. Invitations were extended to all 327 NCAA Division I basketball member institutions with the same number being sent to representative schools. In total, 75 public relations practitioners and 44 news editors completed the entire survey. While researchers had hoped to assess 100 per professional group, the response rate was still 23% and 13% respectively. Low response rate could be attributed to the busyness of the sports season in which invitations were sent. Invitations were sent during the first third of the football season (September). For future research, research invitations perhaps should be distributed during normally slower summer months. This was tried to account for to some degree as initial distribution took place on Wednesday AM, as this was hoped to be the middle of the week between busy sport and football weekends. Perhaps further explanation of the low response rate, especially among editors can be explained by network server configurations. The invitation and survey itself were distributed via email. As such, because of the way the link was configured, presumably a significant number of potential would-be participants were simply unable to participate. This is assumed based various email responses received by researchers. A second attempt at a new link was attempted but at that point, it might have

been too late. For further research, while an email invitation is simple and inexpensive, if more time was allotted for response, perhaps those who did not respond to the initial invitation and reminder via email could be mailed the survey with an enclosed postage paid return envelope. Because of these technical difficulties, again especially on the side of sports media editors, the sample perhaps provides more validity as it relates to the Sports Information Directors.

Additionally, the various proposed elements of a successful press release were drawn from a variety of literature all detailing the do's and don't of press release writing. Some elements upon reflection tend to overlap. If one had access to a small subset of both professions, it might have been nice to request a sort of informal poll or pretest asking what they industry specific professionals themselves regards as useful press release elements.

The respondents in this study are public relations practitioners in sport and sport editors in and around a college environment. It would be an interesting study to survey public relations practitioners not involved in sport and general news editors for their views on effective press release element. Essentially taking this a step further and perhaps generalizing it to a broader audience.

It may also be interesting to take a closer examination of the characteristics of public relations practitioners' college institutions and well as sports editors' newspaper organizations that scored low levels of accuracy about the views of the opposite group to see if commonalities emerge.

Further analyses or research on the journalist-public relations relationship is also needed. Additional future directions for research on this topic might include:

1. A comprehensive study across time in the form of longitudinal study, in which the

seemingly dynamic process of coorientation can be tracked and changes linked to certain communication attempts or breakdowns over time. This study was a cross-sectional design at a point of time.

2. A similar study but using different subsets of the same industry (print vs. broadcast).

3. More emphasis on separating journalists' perceptions of public relations practitioners from their perceptions of public relations-generated materials. Most surveys have not employed designs that directly sought to explore distinctions between the sources and the information offered by those sources. Separating these perceptions can uncover key data on how best to design strategies for bolstering public relations practitioners' credibility and enhancing the value of the materials offered to the media (e.g., format, type of issues, and timing).

4. Qualitative research efforts to probe why media and public relations personnel tend to hold skeptical or negative perceptions of one another. Face-to-face or focus group interviews, designed to supplement the quantitative data already collected and analyzed, may provide insights as to the factors most influencing the formation of journalists' and public relations practitioners' perceptions.

Concluding Comments

The overall goal of this research undertaking was establish two things. First, what are the elements of a successful press release perceived by both public relations practitioners in sport and sport news editors? Second, what is the relationship between these two professional groups? Discovery of the relationship characterized by the perceptions of each

individual group now hope to provide a foundation to build more constructive future relationships.

Three groups can primarily benefit from the findings of this study. First and foremost, because only three to eight percent of press releases actually make it to print or on the airwaves (Morton, 1992), this study perhaps can make public relations writers aware of what elements editors prefer in press releases, thus assuring that their information stands a better chance of being published. Second, successful press releases ultimately benefit the organizational source through increased media coverage of their business practices. Finally, mass media practitioners, in this case sports editors specifically, can benefit in more effective press release writing. Armed with accurate perceptions of editors' needs, public relations practitioners may now be better able to address the needs and expectations of editors. In turn, editors may increasingly find themselves using press releases as a means to save time while providing valuable availability and information about the organization.

Perhaps now too, the provided findings may results in press releases more responsive to journalistic demands and routines that are not based on trial and error or intuition. By establishing the presence of, or lack of, discrepancies in press release opinion among the two groups, we may now be better able to understand the working relationship among these two groups of professionals and be better able to present solutions that have potential advantages to both.

APPENDIX A. SURVEY INSTRUMENT – PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS

What constitutes an effective press release?

What are the elements of a useful and thereby successful press release? How do you as a professional in public relations feel about the press release? Do sports news editors feel the same way? This survey is comprised of three sections. Section 1 asks for your own personal opinion / experience. Section 2 asks how you think sports news editors would rate the following attributes of a good press release. A final section asks for various participant demographical background information.

SECTION 1 – A PUBLIC RELATIONS VIEW
To what extent do you as a public relations practitioner agree that the following elements are essential for successful press release publication?   For all questions in this section, circle a number from 1 to 5 where 1 is "strongly disagree" and 5 is "strongly agree".

NEWS VALUE / CONTENT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.) There is a well defined reason for distributing the press release.	1	2	3	4	5
2.) Press release is focused on one central subject.	1	2	3	4	5
3.) Publishing of the release benefits the institution distributing the release.	1	2	3	4	5
4.) Content of the press release is objective.	1	2	3	4	5
5.) There is potential interest to the reader.	1	2	3	4	5
6.) Press release is applicable to local community.	1	2	3	4	5
7.) Important facts are included.	1	2	3	4	5
8.) All pertinent information needed to tell the story is present (who-what-when-where-why).	1	2	3	4	5
9.) Appropriate quotes from principals are included.	1	2	3	4	5
10.) Good use of "sensational" adjectives, verbs or phrases.	1	2	3	4	5
11). Presence of a well written lead.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
12.) There exists good depth of information.	1	2	3	4	5

FORMAT / STYLE

13.) A brief description of the organization is included.	1	2	3	4	5
14.) Print space is available in the publication.	1	2	3	4	5
15.) Composition of press release is in simple style (basic news writing with short simple to the point sentences and paragraphs).	1	2	3	4	5
16.) Good use of appropriate inverted pyramid structure.	1	2	3	4	5
17.) Limited to one page.	1	2	3	4	5
18.) Headline creates interest.	1	2	3	4	5
19.) The press release is sensitive to editorial deadlines.	1	2	3	4	5
20.) Hitting the right target (release is addressed to the appropriate) editor.	1	2	3	4	5
21.) Packaging the release in a unique style.	1	2	3	4	5
22.) Distribution via mail.	1	2	3	4	5
23.) Distribution via fax.	1	2	3	4	5
24.) Distribution via email.	1	2	3	4	5
25.) Presence of appropriate support images.	1	2	3	4	5
26.) Appropriate identification headings (Title / Contact Information / Page numbers / Release Date).	1	2	3	4	5

Please rank the following elements of a press release in order of importance with 1 being the LEAST IMPORTANT and 7 being the MOST IMPORTANT:

_____ **There exists good depth of information.**

_____ **There is potential interest to the reader.**

_____ **Appropriate localization.**

_____ **Space is available (there is a hole to fill).**

_____ **The press release is sensitive to editorial deadlines.**

_____ **All pertinent information needed to tell the story is present (who-what-when-where-why).**

_____ **Presence of appropriate support images.**

Please list any other elements that you believe constitute an effective press release:

_____

_____

_____

SECTION 2 – A NEWS EDITOR'S VIEW
How as a public relations practitioner do you think that sports news editors would feel about the following elements being of importance in press release writing and distribution (how you think sports editors would answer the same questions outlined above)?

NEWS VALUE / CONTENT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.) There is a well defined reason for distributing the press release.	1	2	3	4	5
2.) Press release is focused on one central subject.	1	2	3	4	5
3.) Publishing of the release benefits the institution distributing the release.	1	2	3	4	5
4.) Content of the press release is objective.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
5.) There is potential interest to the reader.	1	2	3	4	5
6.) Press release is applicable to local community.	1	2	3	4	5
7.) Important facts are included.	1	2	3	4	5
8.) All pertinent information needed to tell the story is present (who-what-when-where-why).	1	2	3	4	5
9.) Appropriate quotes from principals are included.	1	2	3	4	5
10.) Good use of "sensational" adjectives, verbs or phrases.	1	2	3	4	5
11). Well written lead.	1	2	3	4	5
12.) Good depth of information.	1	2	3	4	5

FORMAT / STYLE

13.) A brief description of the organization is included.	1	2	3	4	5
14.) Print space is available in the publication.	1	2	3	4	5
15.) Composition of press release is in simple style (basic news writing with short simple to the point sentences and paragraphs).	1	2	3	4	5
16.) Good use of appropriate inverted pyramid structure.	1	2	3	4	5
17.) Limited to one page.	1	2	3	4	5
18.) Headline provides creates interest.	1	2	3	4	5
19.) The press release is sensitive to editorial deadlines.	1	2	3	4	5
20.) Hitting the right target (release is addressed to the appropriate) editor.	1	2	3	4	5
21.) Packaging the release in a unique style.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
22.) Distribution via mail.	1	2	3	4	5
23.) Distribution via fax.	1	2	3	4	5
24.) Distribution via email.	1	2	3	4	5
25.) Presence of appropriate support images.	1	2	3	4	5
26.) Appropriate identification headings (Title / Contact Information / Page numbers / Release Date).	1	2	3	4	5

How do you feel media editors would rank the following elements of a press release?
Again, rank in order of importance with 1 being the LEAST IMPORTANT and 7 being the MOST IMPORTANT:

_____   **There exists good depth of information.**

_____   **There is potential interest to the reader.**

_____   **Appropriate localization.**

_____   **Space is available (there is a hole to fill).**

_____   **The press release is sensitive to editorial deadlines.**

_____   **All pertinent information needed to tell the story is present (who-what-when-where-why).**

_____   **Presence of appropriate support images.**

Please list any other elements that you believe media editors believe constitutes an effective press release:

_____

_____

_____

SECTION 3 - GENERAL

Sex:
M   F

Age:
_____ 25 or younger
_____ 26-35
_____ 36-45
_____ 46-55
_____ 56 or older

Education:
_____ Less than High School
_____ High School Diploma
_____ Some College
_____ Bachelor's Degree
_____ Postgraduate Degree

Income:
_____ Less than $25,000 yearly
_____ $25,000 - $50,000 yearly
_____ $50,001 - $75,000 yearly
_____ $75,001 - $100,000 yearly
_____ More than $100,000 yearly

Years of Experience:
_____ Less than 5
_____ 6-10
_____ 11-15
_____ 16-20
_____ 21 or more

Have you ever worked for media organization? (newspaper, radio, tv etc…)
Y   N

What is your primary sport that you represent:
_____ Baseball
_____ Basketball
_____ Football
_____ Hockey
_____ Volleyball
_____ Other

Gender of primary sport team that you represent:
M   F

School's Athletic Conference:
_____ America East Conference
_____ Atlantic Coast Conference
_____ Atlantic Sun Conference
_____ Big Ten Conference
_____ Big 12 Conference
_____ Big East Conference
_____ Big West Conference
_____ Colonial Athletic Association
_____ Horizon League
_____ Ivy League
_____ Pacific Ten Conference
_____ Southeastern Conference
_____ Conference USA
_____ Mid-American Conference
_____ Mid-Continent Conference
_____ Missouri Valley Conference
_____ Mountain West Conference
_____ Sun Belt Conference
_____ West Coast Conference
_____ Western Athletic Conference
_____ Other

Estimate of press releases sent monthly:
_____ 10 or less
_____ 11-20
_____ 21-30
_____ 31-40
_____ More than 40

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:
The press release is a very important public relations communication tool.
       1   2   3   4   5
    AGREE   DISAGREE

My time spent distributing press releases is worthwhile.
       1   2   3   4   5
    AGREE   DISAGREE

Press releases influence the amount of additional media coverage.
       1   2   3   4   5
    AGREE   DISAGREE

APPENDIX B.   SURVEY INSTRUMENT – NEWS EDITORS

What constitutes an effective press release?

What are the elements of a useful and thereby a successful press release? How do you as a sports media editor feel about the press release? Do public relations practitioners feel the same way? This survey is comprised of three sections. Section 1 asks for your own personal opinion / experience. Section 2 asks how you think public relations practitioners would rate the following attributes of a good press release. A final section asks various participant demographical background information.

SECTION 1 – A NEWS EDITORS VIEW
To what extent do you as a sport media member agree that the following elements are essential for successful press release publication?   For all questions in this section, please circle a number from 1 to 5 where 1 is "strongly disagree" and 5 is "strongly agree".

NEWS VALUE / CONTENT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.) There is a well defined reason for distributing the press release.	1	2	3	4	5
2.) Press release is focused on one central subject.	1	2	3	4	5
3.) Publishing of the release benefits the institution distributing the release.	1	2	3	4	5
4.) Content of the press release is objective.	1	2	3	4	5
5.) There is potential interest to the reader.	1	2	3	4	5
6.) Press release is applicable to local community.	1	2	3	4	5
7.) Important facts are included.	1	2	3	4	5
8.) All pertinent information needed to tell the story is present (who-what-when-where-why).	1	2	3	4	5
9.) Appropriate quotes from principals are included.	1	2	3	4	5
10.) Good use of "sensational" adjectives, verbs or phrases.	1	2	3	4	5
11). Presence of a well written lead.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
12.) There exists good depth of information.	1	2	3	4	5

FORMAT / STYLE

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
13.) A brief description of the organization is included. 1		2	3	4	5
14.) Print space is available in the publication.	1	2	3	4	5
15.) Composition of press release is in simple style (basic news writing with short simple to the point sentences and paragraphs).	1	2	3	4	5
16.) Good use of appropriate inverted pyramid structure.	1	2	3	4	5
17.) Limited to one page.	1	2	3	4	5
18.) Headline provides insight and creates interest.	1	2	3	4	5
19.) The press release is sensitive to editorial deadlines.	1	2	3	4	5
20.) Hitting the right target (release is addressed to the appropriate) editor.	1	2	3	4	5
21.) Packaging the release in a unique style.	1	2	3	4	5
22.) Distribution via mail.	1	2	3	4	5
23.) Distribution via fax.	1	2	3	4	5
24.) Distribution via email.	1	2	3	4	5
25.) Presence of appropriate support images.	1	2	3	4	5
26.) Appropriate identification headings (Title / Contact Information / Page numbers / Release Date). 1		2	3	4	5

Please rank the following elements of a press release in order of importance with 1 being the LEAST IMPORTANT and 7 being the MOST IMPORTANT:

_____ **There exists good depth of information.**

_____ **There is potential interest to the reader.**

_____ **Appropriate localization.**

_____ **Space is available (there is a hole to fill).**

_____ **The press release is sensitive to editorial deadlines.**

_____ **All pertinent information needed to tell the story is present (who-what-when-where-why).**

_____ **Presence of appropriate support images.**

Please list any other elements that you believe constitute an effective press release:

_____

_____

_____

SECTION 2 – A PUBLIC RELATIONS VIEW
How as a sport media member do you think that public relations practitioners would feel about the following elements being of importance in press release writing and distribution (how you think public relations practitioners in sport would answer the same questions outlined above)?

NEWS VALUE / CONTENT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.) There is a well defined reason for distributing the press release.	1	2	3	4	5
2.) Press release is focused on one central subject.	1	2	3	4	5
3.) Publishing of the release benefits the institution distributing the release.	1	2	3	4	5
4.) Content of the press release is objective.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
5.) There is potential interest to the reader.	1	2	3	4	5
6.) Press release is applicable to local community.	1	2	3	4	5
7.) Important facts are included.	1	2	3	4	5
8.) All pertinent information needed to tell the story is present (who-what-when-where-why).	1	2	3	4	5
9.) Appropriate quotes from principals are included.	1	2	3	4	5
10.) Good use of "sensational" adjectives, verbs or phrases.	1	2	3	4	5
11). Well written lead.	1	2	3	4	5
12.) Good depth of information.	1	2	3	4	5

FORMAT / STYLE

13.) A brief description of the organization is included.	1	2	3	4	5
14.) Print space is available in the publication.	1	2	3	4	5
15.) Composition of press release is in simple style (basic news writing with short simple to the point sentences and paragraphs).	1	2	3	4	5
16.) Good use of appropriate inverted pyramid structure.	1	2	3	4	5
17.) Limited to one page.	1	2	3	4	5
18.) Headline provides insight and creates interest.	1	2	3	4	5
19.) The press release is sensitive to editorial deadlines.	1	2	3	4	5
20.) Hitting the right target (release is addressed to the appropriate) editor.	1	2	3	4	5
21.) Packaging the release in a unique style.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
22.) Distribution via mail.	1	2	3	4	5
23.) Distribution via fax.	1	2	3	4	5
24.) Distribution via email.	1	2	3	4	5
25.) Presence of appropriate support images.	1	2	3	4	5
26.) Appropriate identification headings (Title / Contact Information / Page numbers / Release Date).	1	2	3	4	5

How do you feel public relations practitioners in sport would rank the following elements of a press release? Again, rank in order of importance with 1 being the LEAST IMPORTANT and 7 being the MOST IMPORTANT:

_____ **There exists good depth of information.**

_____ **There is potential interest to the reader.**

_____ **Appropriate localization.**

_____ **Space is available (there is a hole to fill).**

_____ **The press release is sensitive to editorial deadlines.**

_____ **All pertinent information needed to tell the story is present (who-what-when-where-why).**

_____ **Presence of appropriate support images.**

Please list any other elements that you believe public relations practitioners believe constitutes an effective press release:

_____

_____

_____

SECTION 3 - GENERAL

Sex:

M   F

Age:

_____ 25 or younger

_____ 26-35

_____ 36-45

_____ 46-55

_____ 56 or older

Education:

_____ Less than High School

_____ High School Diploma

_____ Some College

_____ Bachelor's Degree

_____ Postgraduate Degree

Income:

_____ Less than $25,000 yearly

_____ $25,000 - $50,000 yearly

_____ $50,001 - $75,000 yearly

_____ $75,001 - $100,000 yearly

_____ More than $100,000 yearly

Years of Experience:

_____ Less than 5

_____ 6-10

_____ 11-15

_____ 16-20

_____ 21 or more

Have you ever worked in a public relations department or organization?

Y   N

What is the primary sport that you cover:

_____ Baseball

_____ Basketball

_____ Football

_____ Hockey

_____ Volleyball

_____ Other

Gender of primary sport team that you cover:
M   F

Paper Circulation:
_____ Less than 10,000
_____ 10,000 to 50,000
_____ More than 50,000

Number of sports journalists on staff:
_____ 3 or less
_____ 4-9
_____ 10 or more

Estimate of press releases received monthly:
_____ 10 or less
_____ 11-20
_____ 21-30
_____ 31-40
_____ More than 40

To what extent to agree or disagree with the following statements:
The press release is a very important communications tool for myself as a sport media member.

1	2	3	4	5
AGREE				DISAGREE

My time spent working with press releases is worthwhile.

1	2	3	4	5
AGREE				DISAGREE

Press releases influence the amount of additional media coverage.

1	2	3	4	5
AGREE				DISAGREE

APPENDIX C.   NCAA DIVISION I MEMBER INSTITUTIONS (Basketball)

Alabama A&M University
Auburn University
University of Alabama at Birmingham
Birmingham-Southern College
Samford University
Jacksonville State University
University of South Alabama
Alabama State University
Troy University
University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville
University of Arkansas, Little Rock
University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff
Arkansas State University
Northern Arizona University
Arizona State University
University of Arizona
University of California, Berkeley
California State University, Fresno
California State University, Fullerton
University of California, Irvine
Long Beach State University
University of California, Los Angeles
Loyola Marymount University
University of Southern California
Pepperdine University
St. Mary's College of California
California State University, Northridge
University of California, Riverside
California State University, Sacramento
University of San Diego
San Diego State University
University of San Francisco
San Jose State University
California Polytechnic State University
University of California, Santa Barbara
Santa Clara University
Stanford University
University of the Pacific
University of Colorado, Boulder
University of Denver
Colorado State University
U.S. Air Force Academy
Fairfield University
Sacred Heart University
Quinnipiac University
Central Connecticut State University
Yale University
University of Connecticut
University of Hartford
American University
George Washington University

Georgetown University
Howard University
Delaware State University
University of Delaware
Florida Atlantic University
University of Miami (Florida)
Bethune-Cookman College
Stetson University
University of Florida
Jacksonville University
Florida International University
University of Central Florida
Florida A&M University
Florida State University
University of South Florida
University of Georgia
Georgia Institute of Technology
Georgia State University
Mercer University
Savannah State University
Georgia Southern University
University of Hawaii, Manoa
Iowa State University
University of Northern Iowa
Drake University
University of Iowa
Boise State University
University of Idaho
Idaho State University
Southern Illinois University at Carbondale
University of Illinois, Champaign
Eastern Illinois University
Chicago State University
DePaul University
University of Illinois at Chicago
Loyola University (Illinois)
Northern Illinois University
Northwestern University
Western Illinois University
Illinois State University
Bradley University
Indiana University, Bloomington
University of Evansville
Indiana University-Purdue University, Fort Wayne
Butler University
Indiana Univ/Purdue Univ at Indianapolis
Ball State University
University of Notre Dame
Indiana State University
Valparaiso University
Purdue University
University of Kansas

Kansas State University
Wichita State University
Western Kentucky University
University of Kentucky
University of Louisville
Morehead State University
Murray State University
Eastern Kentucky University
Louisiana State University
Southern University, Baton Rouge
Grambling State University
Southeastern Louisiana University
University of Louisiana at Lafayette
McNeese State University
University of Louisiana at Monroe
Northwestern State University
University of New Orleans
Tulane University
Louisiana Tech University
Centenary College (Louisiana)
Nicholls State University
University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Boston University
Northeastern University
Harvard University
Boston College
College of the Holy Cross
U.S. Naval Academy
Coppin State College
Loyola College (Maryland)
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
Morgan State University
University of Maryland, College Park
Mount St. Mary's University
University of Maryland, Eastern Shore
Towson University
University of Maine, Orono
University of Michigan
University of Detroit Mercy
Michigan State University
Western Michigan University
Central Michigan University
Oakland University
Eastern Michigan University
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
Southeast Missouri State University
University of Missouri, Columbia
University of Missouri, Kansas City
Missouri State University
Saint Louis University
Alcorn State University
University of Southern Mississippi
Mississippi Valley State University
Jackson State University

Mississippi State University
University of Mississippi
Montana State University-Bozeman
University of Montana
University of North Carolina, Asheville
Gardner-Webb University
Appalachian State University
Campbell University
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
University of North Carolina, Charlotte
Western Carolina University
Davidson College
Duke University
Elon University
North Carolina A&T State University
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
East Carolina University
High Point University
North Carolina State University
University of North Carolina, Wilmington
Wake Forest University
University of Nebraska, Lincoln
Creighton University
University of New Hampshire
Dartmouth College
St. Peter's College
Rider University
Rutgers, State Univ of New Jersey, New Brunswick
Princeton University
Seton Hall University
Fairleigh Dickinson University, Metropolitan
Monmouth University
University of New Mexico
New Mexico State University
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
University of Nevada
University at Albany
State University of New York at Binghamton
Fordham University
Long Island University-Brooklyn Campus
St. Francis College (New York)
University at Buffalo, the State University of NY
Canisius College
Colgate University
Hofstra University
Cornell University
St. John's University (New York)
Siena College
Iona College
Columbia University-Barnard College
Niagara University
Marist College
Manhattan College

St. Bonaventure University
Wagner College
Stony Brook University
Syracuse University
U.S. Military Academy
University of Akron
Ohio University
Bowling Green State University
University of Cincinnati
Xavier University
Cleveland State University
Ohio State University
University of Dayton
Wright State University
Kent State University
Miami University (Ohio)
University of Toledo
Youngstown State University
University of Oklahoma
Oklahoma State University
Oral Roberts University
University of Tulsa
Oregon State University
University of Oregon
University of Portland
Portland State University
Lehigh University
Lafayette College
Bucknell University
Saint Francis University (Pennsylvania)
Robert Morris University
Drexel University
La Salle University
University of Pennsylvania
Saint Joseph's University
Temple University
Duquesne University
University of Pittsburgh
Pennsylvania State University
Villanova University
University of Rhode Island
Brown University
Providence College
College of Charleston (South Carolina)
Charleston Southern University
The Citadel
Clemson University
University of South Carolina, Columbia
Coastal Carolina University
Furman University
South Carolina State University
Winthrop University
Wofford College
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Austin Peay State University
Tennessee Technological University
East Tennessee State University
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
University of Tennessee at Martin
University of Memphis
Middle Tennessee State University
Belmont University
Lipscomb University
Tennessee State University
Vanderbilt University
University of Texas at Arlington
University of Texas at Austin
Lamar University
Texas A&M University, College Station
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
Southern Methodist University
University of North Texas
University of Texas, Pan American
University of Texas at El Paso
Texas Christian University
University of Houston
Rice University
Texas Southern University
Sam Houston State University
Texas Tech University
Stephen F. Austin State University
Prairie View A&M University
University of Texas at San Antonio
Texas State University-San Marcos
Baylor University
Southern Utah University
Utah State University
Weber State University
Utah Valley State College
Brigham Young University
University of Utah
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
University of Virginia
George Mason University
Hampton University
James Madison University
Virginia Military Institute
Liberty University
Norfolk State University
Old Dominion University
Radford University
University of Richmond
Virginia Commonwealth University
College of William and Mary
University of Vermont
Eastern Washington University
Washington State University
University of Washington

Gonzaga University

University of Wisconsin, Green Bay

University of Wisconsin, Madison

Marquette University

University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Marshall University

West Virginia University

University of Wyoming

APPENDIX D.   DAILY NEWSPAPERS REPRESENTED

Newspaper Name
City
ST

The Huntsville Times
Huntsville
AL

Opelika-Auburn News
Opelika
AL

The Birmingham News
Birmingham
AL

Daily Mountain Eagle
Jasper
AL

The Daily Home
Talladega
AL

The Anniston Star
Anniston
AL

Mobile Register
Mobile
AL

Montgomery Advertiser
Montgomery
AL

The Messenger
Troy
AL

The Tuscaloosa News
Tuscaloosa
AL

Northwest Arkansas Times
Fayetteville
AR

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
Little Rock
AR

Pine Bluff Commercial
Pine Bluff
AR

The Jonesboro Sun
Jonesboro
AR

The Arizona Daily Sun
Flagstaff
AZ

East Valley Tribune/Scottsdale
Tribune
Mesa
AZ

Arizona Daily Star
Tucson
AZ

The Oakland Tribune
Oakland
CA

The Fresno Bee
Fresno
CA

The Daily Breeze
Torrence
CA

The Daily Pilot
Costa Mesa
CA

Press-Telegram
Long Beach
CA

Los Angeles Times
Los Angeles
CA

Daily News
Woodland Hills
CA

Los Angeles Times
Los Angeles
CA

Ventura County Star
Ventura
CA

Contra Costa Times
Walnut Creek
CA

The Signal
Santa Clarita
CA

The Press-Enterprise
Riverside
CA

The Sacramento Bee
Sacramento
CA

The San Diego Union-Tribune
San Diego
CA

The San Diego Union-Tribune
San Diego
CA

The San Francisco Chronicle
San Francisco
CA

San Jose Mercury News
San Jose
CA

The Tribune
San Luis Obispo
CA

The Santa Barbara News-Press
Santa Barbara
CA

Palo Alto Daily News
Palo Alto
CA

The Argus
Fremont
CA

The Record
Stockton
CA

Daily Camera
Boulder
CO

Rocky Mountain News
Denver
CO

The Coloradoan
Fort Collins
CO

The Gazette
Colorado Springs
CO

Conneticut Post
Bridgeport
CT

The Hour
Norwalk
CT

Record Journal
Meriden
CT

The Herald
New Britain
CT

New Haven Register
New Haven
CT

The Chronicle
Willimantic
CT

The Bristol Press
Bristol
CT

The Washington Post
Washington
DC

The Washington Times
Washington
DC

The Washington Examiner
Alexandria
VA

USA Today
McLean
VA

Delaware State News
Dover
DE

The News Journal
Wilmington
DE

Boca Raton News
Boca Raton
FL

South Florida Sun-Sentinel
Fort Lauderdale
FL

News-Journal
Daytona Beach
FL

The Observer
New Smyrna Beach
FL

Gainesville Sun
Gainesville
FL

Florida Times-Union
Jacksonville
FL

Miami Herald
Miami
FL

Orlando Sentinel
Orlando
FL

Tallahassee Democrat
Tallahassee
FL

Jackson County Floridian
Marianna
FL

The Tampa Tribune
Tampa
FL

Athens Banner-Herald
Athens
GA

Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Atlanta
GA

Douglas County Sentinel
Douglasville
GA

The Telegraph
Macon
GA

Savannah Morning News
Savannah
GA

Statesboro Herald
Statesboro
GA

Honolulu Advertiser
Honolulu
HI

The Ames Tribune
Ames
IA

Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier
Waterloo
IA

Des Moines Register
Des Moines
IA

Press-Citizen
Iowa City
IA

Idaho Statesman
Boise
ID

Moscow-Pullman Daily News
Moscow
ID

Idaho State Journal
Pocatello
ID

Southern Illinoisan
Carbondale
IL

The News-Gazette
Champaign
IL

Times-Courier
Charleston
IL

Southtown
Tinley Park
IL

Sun-Times
Chicago
IL

Post-Tribune
Chicago
IL

Daily Herald
Arlington Heights
IL

Daily Chronicle
De Kalb
IL

The News Sun
Waukegan
IL

Macomb Journal
Macomb
IL

The Pantagraph
Bloomington
IL

Journal Star
Peoria
IL

The Herald-Times
Bloomington
IN

Courier & Press
Evansville
IN

Journal Gazette
Fort Wayne
IN

Indianapolis Star
Indianapolis
IN

Daily Journal
Franklin
IN

Star Press
Muncie
IN

South Bend Tribune
South Bend
IN

Tribune-Star
Terre Haute
IN

The Times
Munster
IN

Journal and Courier
Lafayette
IN

Journal - World
Lawrence
KS

Manhattan Mercury
Manhattan
KS

Eagle
Wichita
KS

Daily News
Bowling Green
KY

Herald-Leader
Lexington
KY

Courier - Journal
Louisville
KY

The Ledger Independent
Maysville
KY

Ledger & Times
Murray
KY

Richmond Register
Richmond
KY

The Advocate
Baton Rouge
LA

The Daily World
Opelousas
LA

The News-Star
Monroe
LA

The Daily Star
Hammond
LA

The Advertiser
Lafayette
LA

American Press
Lake Charles
LA

Bastrop Daily Enterprise
Bastrop
LA

The Natchitoches Times
Natchitoches
LA

The Times-Picayune
New Orleans
LA

St. Tammany News
Covington
LA

Ruston Daily Leader
Ruston
LA

Shreveport Times
Shreveport
LA

Daily Comet
Thibodaux
LA

Daily Hampshire Gazette
Northampton
MA

The Boston Globe
Boston
MA

The Boston Herald
Boston
MA

The Evening News-Mercury
Malden
MA

The Patriot Ledger
Quincy
MA

Telegram & Gazette
Worcester
MA

The Capital
Annapolis
MD

Baltimore Sun
Baltimore
MD

Carrol County Times
Westminster
MD

The Star-Democrat
Easton
MD

The Frederick News-Post
Frederick
MD

Free Lance Star
Fredericksburg
VA

The Morning Herald/The Daily
Mail
Hagerstown
MD

The Daily Times
Salisbury
MD

Cecil Whig
Elkton
MD

Bangor Daily News
Bangor
ME

Ann Arbor News
Ann Arbor
MI

Detroit Free Press
Detroit
MI

State Journal
Lansing
MI

Kalamazoo Gazette
Kalamazoo
MI

The Morning Sun
Mount Pleasant
MI

The Oakland Press
Pontiac
MI

The Monroe Evening/Sunday
News
Monroe
MI

Star Tribune
Minneapolis
MN

Southeast Missiourian
Cape Girardeau
MO

Daily Tribune
Columbia
MO

Kansas City Star
Kansas City
MO

News - Leader
Springfield
MO

Post-Dispatch
St. Louis
MO

The Natchez Democrat
Natchez
MS

Hattiesburg American
Hattiesburg
MS

The Greenwood
Commonwealth
Greenwood
MS

Clarion - Ledger
Jackson
MS

Starkville Daily News
Starkville
MS

Oxford Eagle
Oxford
MS

Bozeman Chronicle
Bozeman
MT

Missoulian
Missoula
MT

Citizen - Times
Asheville
NC

Star
Shelby
NC

Record & Landmark
Statesville
NC

Dunn Record
Dunn
NC

Sanford Herald
Sanford
NC

Observer
Charlotte
NC

Times News
Henderson
NC

Independent Tribune
Concord
NC

Herald Sun
Durham
NC

The Times-News
Burlington
NC

News & Record
Greensboro
NC

The Dispatch
Lexington
NC

The Daily Reflector
Greenville
NC

Enterprise
High Point
NC

News & Observer
Raleigh
NC

Willmington Star
Wilmington
NC

The Journal
Winston-Salem
NC

Lincoln Journal Star
Lincoln
NE

World Herald
Omaha
NE

Foster's Daily Democrat
Dover
NH

Valley News
White River Junction
VT

The Jersey Journal
Jersey City
NJ

Trenton Times
Trenton
NJ

Home News Tribune
East Brunswick
NJ

The Trentonian
Trenton
NJ

The Record
Hackensack
NJ

North Jersey Herald & News
West Paterson
NJ

Asbury Park Press
Neptune
NJ

Albuquerque Journal
Albuquerque
NM

Sun - News
Las Cruces
NM

Review Journal Las Vegas NV	The Record Troy NY	The Courier Findlay OH
Gazette-Journal Reno NV	The Times Herald-Record Middletown NY	Cincinnati Enquirer Cincinnati OH
Times Union Albany NY	NY Daily News New York NY	Cincinnati Post Cincinnati OH
Pres & Sun - Bulletin Binghamton NY	Batavia Daily news Batavia NY	Plain Dealer Cleveland OH
New York Post New York NY	Poughkeepsie Journal Poughkeepsie NY	Dispatch Columbus OH
New York Times Brooklyn NY	News Times Danbury CT	Dayton News Dayton OH
Newsday Melville NY	The Times Herald Olean NY	Beavercreek News-Current Kettering OH
Buffalo News Buffalo NY	Staten Island Advance Staten Island NY	Record-Courier Ravenna OH
The Observer Dunkirk NY	The Time Greenwich CT	Journal Middletown OH
Oneida Dispatch Hamilton NY	Post-Standard Syracuse NY	Toledo Blade Toledo OH
Journal News White Plains NY	Freeman Kingston NY	Vindicator Youngstown OH
The Ithaca Journal Ithaca NY	Akron Beacon Journal Akron OH	The Norman Transcript Norman OK
Star Ledger Newark NJ	Logan News Logan OH	News-Press Stillwater OK

Tulsa World	Delaware County Times	Independent-Mail
Tulsa	Primos	Anderson
OK	PA	SC
Daily Herald	Times-Herald	The State
Sapulpa	Norristown	Columbia
OK	PA	SC
Gazette-Times	Phoenix	Sun News
Corvallis	Phoenixville	Myrtle Beach
OR	PA	SC
Register-Guard	Post-Gazette	The Greenville News
Eugene	Pittsburgh	Greenville
OR	PA	SC
Orgonian	Tribune-Review	Times & Democrat
Portland	Pittsburgh	Orangeburg
OR	PA	SC
Statesman Journal	Sentinel	Herald
Salem	Lewistown	Rock Hill
OR	PA	SC
Morning Call	Bucks County Courier Times	Herald - Journal
Allentown	Levittown	Spartanburg
PA	PA	SC
Easton Express-Times	The Westerly Sun	Times Free Press
Easton	Westerly	Chattanooga
PA	RI	TN
The Daily Item	Journal	Leaf - Chronicle
Sunbury	Providence	Clarksville
PA	RI	TN
Altoona Mirror	Newport News	Herald-Citizen
Altoona	Newport	Cookeville
PA	RI	TN
The Daily News	Post & Courier	Johnson City Press
McKeesport	Charleston	Johnson City
PA	SC	TN
Philadelphia Inquirer	Gazette	News-Sentinel
Philadelphia	Beaufort	Knoxville
PA	SC	TN
Philadelphia News	Item	The Paris Post-Intelligencer
Philadelphia	Sumter	Paris
PA	SC	TN

Commerical Appeal Memphis TN	Monitor McAllen TX	The Spectrum St. George UT
News Journal Murfreesboro TN	El Paso Times El Paso TX	Herald Journal Logan UT
Tennessean Nashville TN	Star - Telegram Fort Worth TX	Standard-Examiner Ogden UT
The Lebanon Democrat Lebanon TN	Houston Chronicle Houston TX	The Deseret Morning News Salt Lake City UT
Columbia Daily Herald Columbia TN	Baytown Sun Baytown TX	Herald Provo UT
Times-Gazette Shelbyville TN	The Daily News Galveston TX	Salt Lake Tribune Salt Lake City UT
Terrell Tribune Terrell TX	Huntsville Item Huntsville TX	The Roanoke Times Roanoke VA
American-Statesman Austin TX	Avalanche-Journal Lubbock TX	Progress Charlottesville VA
Enterprise Beaumont TX	Daily Sentinel Nacogdoches TX	Manassas Journal Messenger Manassas VA
Bryan-College Station Eagle Bryan TX	Brenham Banner Press Brenham TX	The Daily Press Newport News VA
Caller-Times Corpus Christi TX	Express-News San Antonio TX	Daily News-Record Harrisonburg VA
Dallas Morning News Dallas TX	Record San Marcos TX	Virnginian Review Covington VA
Record-Chronicle Denton TX	Tribune-Herald Waco TX	News and Advance Lynchburg VA

Virginian Pilot	Free Press	The Capital Times
Norfolk	Burlington	Madison
VA	VT	WI
Suffolk News-Herald	Lewiston Morning Tribune	Journal Sentinel
Suffolk	Lewiston	Milwaukee
VA	ID	WI
Martinsville Bulletin	Walla Walla Union Bulletin	Freeman
Martinsville	Walla Walla	Waukesha
VA	WA	WI
Times-Dispatch	Times	Herald Dispatch
Richmond	Seattle	Huntington
VA	WA	WV
The Hopewell News	Spokesman - Review	The Dominion Post
Hopewell	Spokane	Morgantown
VA	WA	WV
The Progress-Index	Press Gazette	Laramie Boomerang
Petersburg	Green Bay	Laramie
VA	WI	WY

APPENDIX E.   INVITATION/LETTER OF CONSENT

DATE

Dear Sir or Madam:

Hello, my name is Joel Janecek, a graduate student in the Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication, Iowa State University. I am currently conducting my thesis research under the guidance of Dr. Suman Lee at the Greenlee School. This research is to investigate how public relations practitioners and journalists perceive the elements of a successful press release in sport and how they estimate the other's views on the same issues.

As a member of the public relations or media that deal directly with the subject of sport, you will be asked to answer a series of questions regarding your views on press release elements and use. If you are not the individual at your respective institution that deals with press releases, please feel free to pass this along to the individual who may be able to help with this endeavor.

Please be assured that your participation should be voluntary that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The surveys will be used for research purposes only and the confidentiality of your responses is guaranteed. Only the principal investigators will have access to the returned surveys. All materials will be destroyed once data analysis has been successfully completed. There is no physical component to this research, so there is no risk of physical injury.

Please proceed to the following link and proceeding survey at this time or at your earliest convenience. By doing so, we assume you understand the information provided above and have agreed to participate voluntarily in this study.

If you have any concerns or questions at any time, please do not hesitate to contact me via phone at (402) 699-1104, or via email at jjanecek@iastate.edu. If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, austingr@iastate.edu, or Diane Ament, Director, Office of Research Assurances (515) 294-3115, dament@iastate.edu.

Please feel free to make a copy of this form to keep for your records.

I have read the above information. I understand that I am free to contact the researchers and the IRB office at Iowa State University should I have questions at any time during the course of this study. I consent to participate in the study.

LINK HERE

APPENDIX F.   OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

Additonal comments via email after initial dissemination of survey:

Using a web site almost precludes issuing press releases. We're coming to believe this: why would be issue a release that A) a news entity might immediately post on its web site when B) we can do so first? Hence, many of the editors and people who have an interest in covering our sports find the information presented as news to begin with -- not as a behind-the-scenes press release. When news developments occur, surely we do press releases -- signing new contracts, hiring new coaches, announcing findings of some sort of panel, reporting a tragedy. The rest of the time we're putting together material reporters and broadcasters can use for their coverage. Plus, if they don't choose to use it, it's delivered to our supporters in another form -- the web site. It's one thing for Caterpillar to announce via a news release that it's going to pay a higher stock dividend this year. It's entirely another for a university athletics department to present its program via a wide variety of delivery systems of another vein.

I receive dozens of news releases each day. Over the years, I have taken it upon myself to tutor via e-mail/phone/meetings several new-to-the-profession public relations and sports information professionals. I did so because these professionals in public relations agencies or sports information departments sent me such awful news releases that I was embarrassed for them. Some veteran PR/SID pros could use some tutoring, too. And, of course, I had selfish reasons: I didn't want to have to keep receiving such unprofessional, almost incomprehensible material and figured others in my profession would agree. I'll be quite interested in reading about the results of your survey, so if they're eventually going to be released or posted online, please let me know. Good luck with your thesis.

We never, ever run news releases in the paper. There are times when a news release will give us info that sparks a story idea.   But never in my 20 plus years in Sports have we ever used a news release in the paper.

Editors - Please list any other elements that you believe constitute an effective press release:

"Release contains proper contextual information (if your team finished third, which teams were first and second; if your player is on an all-star team, who else is on the team) - Release is prepared in a professional manner (often that means "unbiased"; the most unprofessional releases I deal with come from universities that report their own teams' results and manage to find ways to avoid reporting the actual results of the overall event in order to avoid mentioning that a rival university fared better in the same event; these releases are the ones that end up deleted or in the recycling bin."

"Sensitivity to deadline is important, obviously, however proper lead time is also important if said release is desired to have an impact (i.e. awareness/attendance at events). If I do not get a release far enough in advance, it has little impact/results."

"When press releases are sent to more than one person it typically causes confusion and makes me less apt to use it."

"Accuracy is critical."

"Contact information from the distributing source."

"Be aware of multi-media angle; for instance, I am the sports editor of a paper, television station and a website. And, do not send me a press release on the day of the event!!!!"

Editors - Please list any other elements that you believe public relations practitioners might feel constitute an effective press release:

"Generates questions from media (a minor trend seems to be sending a news release that directs media to a Web site for details or requires the reporter/editor to call to find out the rest of who-what-when-where-why, with the "how" part even more difficult to discover; the downside of that is the harder you make me work to read a news release, the less likely it is that I'll find the time to finish the PR person's job.)"

"Sorry but I am not an SID and don't care to pretend to think like one."

"Instead of quotes in the release, it should explain availability of source."

Editors - Additional Comments (optional)

"I am not a big fan of press releases due to the large volume of meaningless missives I receive."

"Personal contact is more important. Brevity of press releases help, especially for colleges. Nobody needs an 18-page release on the women's volleyball team (well, except at some places)."

"There is nothing worse than a PR person who insists they know their readership better than you, because they have a "great story idea for you." No PR rep that has ever had a "great story" for me has EVER had a "great story."

"PR professionals and sports information department staff should be sure to get to know their target audience for news releases to determine what information is most useful. Call the reporters/editors and ask what they need or prefer. For example, I deal with words, not images, and the words I deal with go into our own publishing system. Therefore, I don't want flashing icons and a half-dozen colorful fonts in a news release. Just give me words. Related to that, don't you just hate when you receive an attached file that won't open? How about when it happens when you're in a hurry to get to the information? Well, that happens to the media plenty. That's because not all of us use Word or PowerPoint or other related software in our daily jobs. We use specialized publishing systems. That means opening an attachment from one of those applications can be difficult, or, in our case, impossible, without sending the file to tech support. If I'm on deadline, I'm not going to wait for the translation to return. So, if you really want to be sure your news releases get read, and, more importantly, get published, send them in an accessible manner. If you're using e-mail, send the plain text in the body of the message for those of us who just want words and include the attachment for the entertainment of people dazzled by doodads.
Thanks for listening."

"There is often a tremendous slant in the press releases we receive from the local university we cover. In fact, we've noticed on staff at the newspaper that these releases have become uniformly pro-the university since the hiring of a new athletics director. Obviously, it could be coincidence, but the school definitely seems bent on promoting itself through the press release — and only after being bombarded by phone calls and e-mail queries will the same school put out a release on a sensitive or controversial matter."

PR- Please list any other elements that you believe constitute an effective press release

"It needs to be timely. A good press release doesn't leave the editor asking questions."

"Timing!"

"It certainly depends on what the release is for. Game notes certainly require appropriate statistics much more than they require "support images", while a Player of the Week-type release would require an image but no statistics. Stats, however, are very important in a sports-related release, and in my mind would rank third in the 1-7 list."

"Having a relationship as a professional with the editor to be able to know their preferences and be able to sell the idea. Using bullets or other techniques to get right to the point. Often times, lists, charts and graphics are useful for certain items. There are multiple types of releases, so all are not the same. Sometimes you have to do releases in crisis situations to respond. Other times, they are game notes and facts. Other times, they are to sell a feature idea. And on and on."

"Topic draws editors in to write a separate story on the topic."

"Accuracy of facts and information; lack of spelling and grammatical errors."

"Accuracy and AP style are important."

"Simple, to the point, providing necessary background information for those wishing to produce their own accounts."

"An early "grabber" ... cover the five W's, but also have that one fact early that piques interest."

"I think you need to define 'press release' in this day and age. The athletic offices are now putting together up to 50 page supplements they call releases for football. The problem now is 'target audience' and that means press and people. You have so many different media types and deadlines are now 24/7 in some cases. Talk radio, internet media, multiple outlets within the media types (IE--ESPN and its media avenues)."

"Letterhead or masthead identifying what institution is distributing."

"A strong, well-worded headline that "SELLS" the story to potential readers And a tightly-written lead that tells the entire story."

"Knowing the target audience to get the message of the release across Organized, concise, not a bunch of editorializing or superlatives."

"Eye appealing presentation, including appropriate use of leading."

"Not a lot of wasted words, just quick facts that are to the point."

PR - Please list any other elements that you believe media editors might feel constitute an effective press release

"How many readers will read the story? The media are not interested in good news stories, but the news itself. They are looking for things that the companies, schools, are not as interested in getting out to the public. Every paper has "holes" for lists, graphs and charts as filler or eye-grabbing info."

"Accuracy of facts and information; lack of spelling and grammatical errors."

"Space is available depends on the release and what it says. Potential interest determines if it gets in and when nowadays. A release on firing a coach will get play despite the news hole. Annnouncing your recruits for tennis will go when the paper has room. Goes back to type of media avenues again too."

"Advance notice that something is coming."

"A follow-up phone call to be sure it is received."

"My job is to publicize my institution through the accomplishments of its athletics teams. While I cannot ignore the realities within which editors operate, I do not devote my limited cognitive ability to the imaginative identification required here."

"They want information that their readers will be interested in."

PR - Additional Comments (optional)

"Bigger schools & conferences don't have the same issues smaller ones do and don't do the same number of press releases."

"For most of us, localization isn't an issue. The story is local because the college or university is local. Also in terms of space. We always feel that if a press release is important enough the editors will make space. They consistently do that. We do try to help them out by alerting them that something important is coming and telling them when it will be distributed."

"At mid-majors and the smaller schools the Media Relations or Sports Information directors typically have a handful of "primary" sports. In my case I handle football, men's basketball, softball and women's gymnastics (in addition to tennis and golf) and the coaches of the first four sports would all tell you they are my "primary" sport."

"If press release is communication, then it's a 5. You communicate often without the press release itself. A couple sentences in an e-mail can pitch a story idea faster than a press release pitched to all the media. The media likes to have a story that only their paper has and not every media outlet. Same with TV."

"University run websites are emerging as a driving force for placement of press releases, since the news hole for sports sections continues to shrink and newspapers are curtailing their staff resources for on-site coverage of sports. As a whole, I believe more SIDs are writing for their websites, not with the outside media in mind."

"Newspapers dying... more time now spent on website maintenance."

"Since I oversee 25 sports, the press release is important but how we produce the release is interesting. The 'old' method of doing a release and sending it out is over. We send out (via e-mail) 11-20 in football but the most important item for us is to get our info on the web. We are now our own media avenue. Bios, quotes, notes, stats (the veritable plethora of stats and notes) seems to drive us. Our web site has become the 'face' of our athletic dept. The current methodology of PR in sports administration today is not very well thought out. Another story for another day."

"While press releases are important, having a relationship with the media is even more effective in getting your message out."

"With the explosion of the internet, press releases have become more than just a way to alert the media to what is happening. We treat our website as our own daily newspaper so even if the release isn't printed or used by any external outlets, it still serves a valuable purpose by being posted on our own outlet that fans, alumni and even media use."

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