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### Melbourne Mandate: Key document defining the direction of the global PR industry and endorsed by 160 000 professionals

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**THE MELBOURNE MANDATE:**

***A call to action for new areas of value in public relations and communication management***

**WORLD PUBLIC RELATIONS FORUM**

**NOVEMBER 2012**

The mandate of public relations is to build and sustain strong relationships between an organisation and its publics, and, in doing so, contribute to society.

The Global Alliance’s 2010 Stockholm Accords affirmed the characteristics of the communicative organisation and the value of public relations and communications professionals in management, governance, sustainability, and internal and external communication.

Today, unprecedented public access to communication presents new challenges and opportunities for organisations – and for global society. This presents a new mandate for public relations and communication management: a set of roles, responsibilities and principles hereby endorsed by delegates to the 2012 World Public Relations Forum in Melbourne, Australia.

**The new mandate**

Public relations and communication professionals have a mandate to:

- define and maintain an organisation’s character and values;
- build a culture of listening and engagement; and
- instill responsible behaviours by individuals and organisations.

These roles are essential and interconnected: an organization must understand its character and responsibility to have meaningful engagement with its stakeholders. Taken together, these roles form an essential contribution to organisational strategy, and to society.



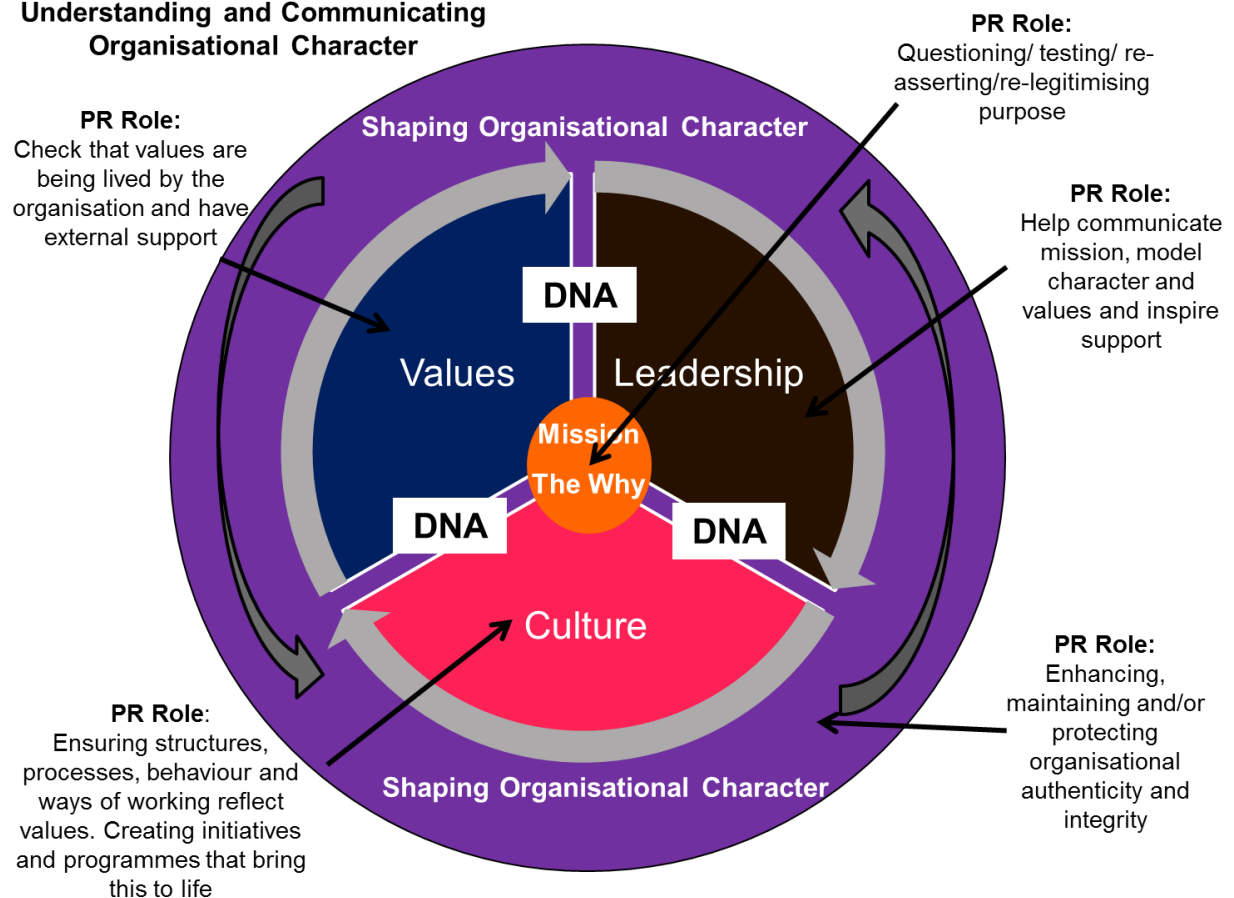
## Principles

### Defining an organisation's character and values.

The communicative organisation has a clear sense of its core or 'DNA,' which consists of three strands:

1. **Values:** the set of values the organisation lives by and which guides its decisions and behaviour.
2. **Leadership:** the responsibility of leaders to model the character and values of the organisation and beliefs on how it should operate, through decisions taken and the direction they set.
3. **Culture:** the processes, structures, collective behaviour and ways of working that are part of organisational life. These things affect the way people and groups interact with each other internally and with external stakeholders.

### Understanding and Communicating Organisational Character



Public relations and communication professionals have a mandate to:

1. Shape organisational character by enhancing, maintaining and protecting the organisation's authenticity – its reputation for consistently communicating truth and meriting trust.
2. Be guardians of the organisation's character and values by providing feedback to the organisation on how this character is being judged and received, and communicating the character to stakeholders.
3. Ensure organisational values guide decisions and actions internally, and that externally they are recognized and understood by stakeholders.
4. Evaluate the organisation against those values by monitoring stakeholder views and discussions about the organisation.
5. Help leaders to uphold and communicate those values to inspire stakeholders to follow, support, or change behaviour.
6. Help leaders understand where they need to change, and ensure they are equipped to be effective communicators and to embrace communication responsibilities.
7. Work with senior managers, human resource professionals and other management functions to ensure that structures, processes and ways of working reflect the claimed organisational character and values.
8. Research and create initiatives that bring the culture to life, recommending the most appropriate communication channels, content and tone.

#### **Building a culture of listening and engagement.**

The communicative organisation:

1. Builds trust through respectful and enduring relationships with both internal and external stakeholders and the wider community.
2. Pursues policies and practices based on internationally recognized standards for corporate responsibility, sustainability, reporting and transparency.
3. Sees listening and engagement as a research-based process to identify both risks and opportunities, in which all internal and external stakeholders can play a role.

Public relations and communication professionals have a mandate to:

1. Develop research methodologies to measure an organisation's capacity to listen, and apply these metrics before and after the pursuit of strategy and during any major action.
2. Identify and activate channels to enable organisational listening.
3. Identify all stakeholder groups affected by the pursuit of an organisation's strategy, both now and in the future.
4. Identify all stakeholder groups that affect the pursuit of the organisation's strategy, both now and in the future.
5. Identify these stakeholder groups' expectations and consider them both in the organisation's strategy and before taking any action.
6. Ensure sound reasons are communicated to stakeholders in cases where their expectations cannot be met.
7. Prove that the organisation is genuinely listening as it takes actions in pursuit of its strategy.
8. Evaluate the effectiveness of the organisation's listening.

## Instilling societal, organisational, individual and professional responsibility.

The communicative organisation understands the responsibility flowing from two core principles:

1. The organisation derives its licence to operate from the value it creates for all its stakeholders, which benefits society at large.
2. The value of an organisation is linked directly to its reputation, which in turn is sustained by building trust, acting with integrity and being transparent about the organisation's strategy, operations, use of capital and performance.

Public relations and communication professionals have a mandate to...

Demonstrate **societal responsibility** by:

1. Creating and maintaining transparent - open, honest and accessible - processes and credible communication that balance public interests with organisational needs.
2. Supporting the sustainability strategies of the communities from which the organisation obtains resources and its licence to operate.
3. Ensuring that communication on behalf of employers, clients and brands does not overstate the value of products and services, which would distort the expectations of consumers and other stakeholders.
4. Defining accountability metrics against which contributions to society should be measured and improved.

Demonstrate **organisational responsibility** by:

1. Providing strategic relationship and communication counsel to organisational leaders to ensure responsible decisions and actions.
2. Seeking to align internal and external stakeholder interests, and to ensure that organisational values and actions meet or exceed societal expectations.
3. Influencing and contributing to the organisation's sustainability strategies.
4. Reinforcing an organisational culture of improvement by engaging internal and external stakeholders in meaningful dialogue and positive change.
5. Defining accountability metrics to evaluate and improve the contribution of relationships and communication strategies to the achievement of organisational goals.

Demonstrate **professional responsibility** by:

1. Understanding, abiding by and operating in accordance with the relevant professional codes of ethics.
2. Communicating the professional standards that guide public relations and communication to internal and external stakeholders.
3. Maintaining competence by continually pursuing education and learning so as to perform responsibly and effectively.

And demonstrate **personal responsibility** by:

1. Ensuring one's personal communication is always truthful, and that one's actions reflect the imperatives of doing good and creating mutual benefit over the long term.
2. Recognizing and appreciating differences between one's personal values and those of organisational stakeholders and communities, in line with societal expectations.
3. Taking personal ownership of the professional standards by which day-to-day decisions and actions are governed.
4. Being willing to make tough decisions – and understanding the consequences - when circumstances, society or the organisation create conditions that prevent or contradict one's professional standards.
5. Being accountable for one's decisions and actions.

#### **BE IT RESOLVED THAT**

The 160,000 professionals represented in the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management strive to use the principles of the Melbourne Mandate to advocate, demonstrate and enhance the value of public relations and communication to their organisations and communities, and to global society.

## APPENDIX:

### THE INTEGRITY INDEX & TESTING VALUES

Values are the publicly declared 'contract' that an organisation has with its stakeholders on how it will fulfill its mission and purpose: a declaration of what principles guide its decisions-making and behaviour. Given that values are so closely tied to and indeed, define character, the extent to which an organisation lives up its values is a test of its authenticity and integrity.

Values can be checked in one or both of two ways:

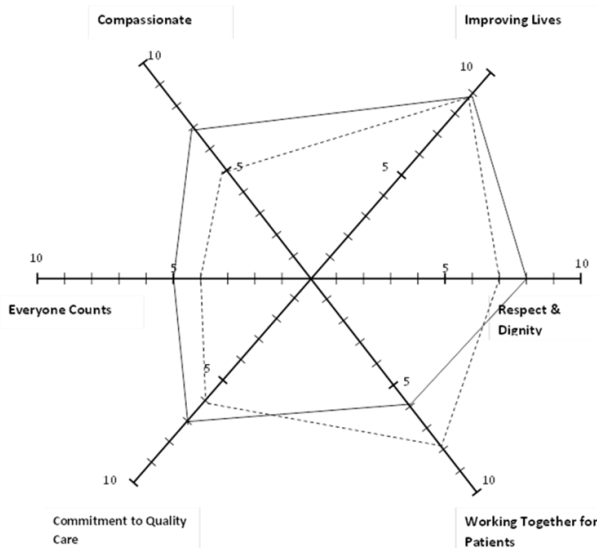
1. **Outside-in:** Where existing discussions about an organisation are analysed, values 'in use' can be abstracted. For example, by using a social media partner, it would be possible to undertake analysis of a variety of stakeholders to identify the range of values that are attributed to an organisation and by whom. It would also be possible to build an overall picture. The same principle can apply to traditional media analysis and to other forms of conversation and feedback between an organisation and its stakeholders.
2. **Inside-out:** Where the organisation asks stakeholders to rate their performance against declared values using the values spidergram.

The matching of these two perspectives brings enriched insights.

## The Integrity Index: Explanation

### Using the Integrity Index:

Example of a health organisation spidergram



### Explanation of process

- The Spidergram method can be used to test with various groups how they rate against their proposed or actual values.
- These ratings are then used to initiate discussions on the disparities between groups on each value and between values. The ratings for an organisation are not intended to be compared against another organisation (e.g. a competitor) but to stimulate strategic discussion and act as a catalyst for positive internal change.
- An index<sup>2</sup> can be developed for each value or the combination of Values by using the algorithm:

$$\frac{\text{Sum of values rating}}{\text{Maximum possible Values score}} \times 100.$$

Example: An organisation has 6 values: they are rated on the Spidergram as 8 for two of the Values, 4 for two and 9 and 3 for the other two.

$$8+8+4+4+9+3=36.$$

$$\text{Maximum possible } (6 \times 10) = 60$$

$$36/60 = 0.6, \times 100 = 60\%$$

This calculation can be adjusted to score each Value: 5 on the scale obviously converts to 50%

- The utility of this method is that it graphically demonstrates areas of strength and authenticity when values are rated well and of areas where issues exist.

Note: The thinking behind organisational character, the Organizational Character model, and the Integrity Index are the intellectual property of the Character Working Group of the Global Alliance, which should be acknowledged when citing this work.

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