

❖ **Jane Johnston — *Media Relations: Issues and Strategies*  
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Media relations is a common subject taught in most media, communications and public relations programs. However, it seems that the range of textbooks in the market on this subject is scant. Therefore, a lot of media relations instructors end up using general public relations textbooks for their classes. Jane Johnston's *Media Relations: Issues and Strategies* is among the very rare books on this subject that, as the author argues, attempts to provide an overall picture of how relationships with media can be strategically managed and the position of media relations in the public relations profession, media, and society.

The book consists of thirteen chapters. Even though all chapters are not grouped, it seems apparent that the author tries to provide a 'big picture' of media relations by pointing out that media relations is a subfield of public relations and by providing discussions at the beginning on the media relations environment, relevant communication theories and how to work with the news media (Chapters 1–4). Later more practical explanations of media relations work is provided as Johnston discusses common media relations tactics such as media kits, news releases and media conferences in detail (Chapters 5–9). Similar to other introductory public relations textbooks, this section provides writing tips and suggestions on using different media relations tactics with some examples from Australia. In Chapters 10–13, a discussion on how to work with different media platforms including print, broadcast and the Internet, is provided. Finally, the end chapter concludes with case studies of successful media relations from Australia.

The fact that this book is written in simple language with a clear orientation to the field, makes it suitable for the lower-level undergraduate classes on introductory media relations and/or public relations. For example, in Chapter 2, Johnston provides a broad framework of media in Australia as she discusses the overall legal foundation and major media ownerships in all states in this country. Students and readers who are new to the field will certainly find this introduction to the Australian news media system very useful. However, readers may find that there is not much discussion on the theoretical aspects of media relations and not much academic research on media relations and public relations is cited. Chapter 3 is the only section where some theories are discussed.

In Chapters 5–9, when Johnston discusses tactics in media relations, she provides very

practical tips of do's and don'ts in media relations with lucid examples to illustrate those tactics. The chapter on writing media release in particular provides a solid discussion on how to write news articles from a media relations' perspective. This part is a strength of this book as the media release is considered the main tactic of media relations and writing effective media releases is the essential skill that students of media relations need to master. The following chapters discuss how to organise and employ other media relations tactics, in both written and oral genres. These include media kits, feature stories, letters to editor, media conferences and tours, and media interviews. However, given the vast array of media relations tactics available, the explanation and discussion on these topics is not given much in detail. For example, more suggestions on media training, which is arguably one main area of media relations, could have been provided with concrete examples or transcripts.

In the last few chapters, Johnston discusses different media platforms including print, broadcast, and the Internet in Australia, as well as their implications for media relations work. This part is, once again, another strength of this book in that it provides not only a clear picture of how those media platforms function, but also why media relations practitioners need to think strategically in developing relationships with different media. The end chapter then concludes with three case studies of successful media relations campaigns in Australia. These cases are clear illustrations of media relations practices that Johnston tries to explain throughout the book.

More seasoned readers and/or teachers of media relations who usually follow the four steps model in designing a media relations campaign (including research, objectives, implementation, and evaluation), may find some important elements of media relations missing in this book. For example, the book does not address how to conduct research or needs-analysis to determine goals and objectives of a media relations campaign. The thorough discussion on media tactics in this book can be served as the implementation stage but once again the evaluation part, which is also important in assessing the success of media relations effort, is not addressed in this book.

In general, *Media Relations: Issues and Strategies* is written in an engaging, easy to understand style. It provides excellent examples and cases of media relations from Australia. The book may not provide a comprehensive discussion on theories and academic research in media relations and public relations but it can be used as a good introductory resource for those who are new to this area.

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