

## advertising vs. public relations: what's the difference

by Julie Olthoff, President, VIA Marketing, Inc.

"My company has a large budget for advertising, so why should I need public relations?" I've heard this comment more than once, and my comeback is this: the purpose of advertising is to sell a product. Public relations has many facets—one is to give your organization legitimacy.

Broken down to a single phrase, "public relations helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other" ([www.prsa.org](http://www.prsa.org)).

The most effective way to get your message out is to use both advertising and public relations. For example, a not-for-profit can advertise a fundraiser. It can also send out a press release detailing the purpose of the fundraiser, triggering one or more media stories about the event and about the organization. Public relations can assist an organization (notice I'm not limiting the definition to business) in many ways.

It can:

- Anticipate, analyze and interpret public opinion and attitudes that may impact the organization.
- Council the organization (at all levels) regarding policy decisions, communications, and courses of action.
- Research, conduct, and evaluate (on a continuing basis) programs of action and communication to inform the public of an organization's goals. These goals may include employee, shareholder, community, and government relations, as well as marketing.
- Plan and execute efforts to influence or change public policy. Strategies may include setting objectives, planning, budgeting, and managing the resources needed.

Coupled with advertising or on its own, public relations can be a powerful tool for any organization.