

Public Relations and Community Support:
Assessing Fortune 500 Web Sites

Katie Elizabeth Reynolds

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Master of Arts, English
Emphasis in Communication Studies

Dr. John C. Tedesco, Advisor
Dr. Rachel Holloway, Committee Member
Dr. James Collier, Committee Member

Defended April 21, 2003
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords : Public Relations, Community Support,
Community Relations, Web Sites, Fortune 500

Copyright 2003 by Katie Reynolds

Public Relations and Community Support: Assessing Fortune 500 Web Sites

Katie E. Reynolds

Abstract

This content analysis examined presence of 47 public relations community support variables on a systematic random sample of 166 Fortune 500 corporate web pages. Three hypotheses and two research questions guided the analysis. Hypotheses predicted (1) the increased implementation of community support gateway links on corporate web sites since 2000, (2) that corporate industry type influences the Web presence of community support, and (3) that corporate rank influences the Web presence of community support. Research questions analyzed one-way and two-way tool presence as well as community support presence at local, national, and global community levels. Results supported corporate rank as an indicator of community support on corporate web pages; however, results did not support corporate industry as an indicator of community support or the increase of community support presence on corporate web sites. Analysis includes discussion regarding reasons for lack of community support and two-way communication tool presence on corporate web sites. The thesis concludes with recommendations for implementation of two-way public relations community support tools in order to facilitate mutual understanding, trust, and dialogue between a corporation and its local, national, and global communities.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. John C. Tedesco for his support, encouragement, and guidance. He has been a patient, insightful, and excellent mentor throughout my graduate studies.

I would also like to thank members of my committee, Dr. Rachel Holloway and Dr. James Collier, for their advice and support.

Table of Contents

Purpose Statement	1
Literature Review	2
Method	16
Results	21
Discussion	29
References	39
Tables	44
Table 1	45
Table 2	46
Table 3	47
Table 4	48
Table 5	49
Table 6	50
Table 7	51
Table 8	52
Appendices	53
Appendix 1	54
Appendix 2	58
Curriculum Vitae	59

Purpose Statement

In the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and corporate scandals such as Enron and Worldcom, it has become increasingly important for an organization to create a candid dialogue with its community. The question of how corporations are currently developing relationships with their global, national, and local communities in comparison to the pre-scandal and terrorist attack period led to the creation of this study. This analysis is especially relevant and timely as corporations are increasingly undergoing extensive Federal audits and reconstruction of their responsibilities and services to the public.

The purpose of this content analysis is to investigate “community support” material as a public relations function on a systematic randomly selected set of 166 Fortune 500 corporate web sites. For this study, “community support” constitutes any human resources, financial resources, or decision-making function of public relations specifically directed at fostering relationships with the global, national, and local community in which a corporation exists. Specifically, this study investigates a set of 47 variables divided into three groups: community support “gateway,” community support communication tools, and community support programs. The study analyzes which one-way communication tools and which two-way communication tools are used on a corporate web site in order to foster community support. The study also analyzes which human resources, financial resources, and decision-making resources appear on a corporate web site as a function of public relations and community support. Variable data was gathered over the course of two weeks between February 17 and February 28, 2003. Once the data was gathered, it was entered into SPSS for statistical analysis.

This content analysis aims to contribute a better understanding of the current status of community support efforts on corporate web sites. Additionally, this content analysis aims to help the corporate world understand changes in community support patterns since September 11, 2001, which community support communication tools are being used or neglected on corporate web sites, and which industries need to strengthen relationships with their communities through web site communication. With this study, corporations can learn to incorporate a greater variety of community support information on their web sites, better address the community as a stakeholder, and incorporate a wider variety of public relations and communication tools on their web sites.

Literature Review

Community relations acts as a guiding force in the ethical, social, and moral behaviors of a corporation. Corporate community relations, corporate social responsibility, and corporate citizenship programs foster and strengthen relationships between an organization and its stakeholders, local community, and global community. In today's "wired" community, a corporate web site is often a primary means for displaying community relations activities such as voluntarism, philanthropy, and community service. The following literature review analyzes community relations, corporate social responsibility, and corporate citizenship as a public relations function and prepares a strong foundation for a study of community relations activities displayed on web pages of select Fortune 500 companies.

Corporate Community Relations

Corporate community relations is the public relations function that has traditionally been responsible for community outreach, philanthropy, and voluntarism. Often, it is viewed as a management function devoted to interacting with local communities while promoting the interests of the company and its community. Specific activities carried out by corporate community relations include employee voluntarism, community-based programs, and relationships with civic, professional, and nonprofit organizations (Altman, 1998). In the profession of corporate community relations, public relations practitioners must monitor and evaluate social attitudes, analyze corporate policies, make recommendations for maintaining programs, and develop communication strategies. Practitioners often respond to social needs of the community. They act as "social sensors" to identify and measure changes in public values, attitudes, and expectations that could affect company performance (Daugherty, 2000). Those performing the role of the "social sensor" also act as "boundary spanners." Like social sensors, boundary spanners serve as the gatekeepers and interpreters of activities and communication involving an organization. According to Wood (1990), boundary spanners are the people who gather information from and conduct transactions with stakeholders in the environment. Once the boundary spanners and public practitioners get an understanding of the public and environment with which they interact, they sometimes implement systems of feedback within the organization and establish two-way communication channels with social groups (Daugherty, 2000).

Corporate Social Responsibility

Key words and phrases are used interchangeably to describe similar corporate community relations functions, such as corporate social responsibility, corporate philanthropy, and corporate citizenship. The term “social responsibility,” later tagged “corporate social responsibility” (CSR), was perhaps the first phrase used to describe the notion that organizations should work to enhance the general welfare of the community. The meaning of corporate social responsibility has evolved over fifty years. Bowen’s (1953) definition refers to corporate social responsibility as “the obligation of business men (sic) to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society” (p.6). This definition of CSR includes the key goal of community improvement. Corporations engage in community improvement when they “arrange the location of factories and shops, the disposal of smoke and waste, the appearance of buildings and grounds so that the living environment will be healthful and aesthetically satisfying” (p.11). Additionally, Bowen stresses that industries should strive to “achieve the kind of community organization, services, and facilities which will provide a wholesome and satisfying social environment” (p.11). Harold Johnson’s (1971) definition considers an even more directed responsiveness and concern for societal values. He defines a socially responsible organization as one that takes into account employees, suppliers, dealers, local communities, and the nation, instead of striving only for larger profits for its stockholders and local environment. Over time, the definition of corporate social responsibility has evolved to illustrate the activities of a corporation that are for the sake of the social community and its inhabitants. Elbert and Parket (1973) suggest that an easy way to think of corporate social responsibility is “good neighborliness.” This is the obligation to help solve neighborhood problems and meet local concerns (as cited in Carroll, 1999). Throughout the 1970s the definition of corporate social responsibility continued to evolve and expand into a four-part model.

According to Carroll (1979), the social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time. Carroll refers to these elements as the pillars of the four-part model of corporate social responsibility. The first three roles are expectations placed on the organization by society: to produce goods, to abide by the law, and follow norms of good and bad. The fourth role of an organization, the discretionary role, plays a unique and significant role in the community. Discretionary activities include voluntary roles that the organization assumes but

for which society does not provide a clear-cut expectation, including philanthropic activities, contributions, training, and childcare. These services to the external and internal stakeholders of a corporation are highly visible and display the organization's concerns that extend beyond economic gain. Whereas select corporations benefit the community through corporate social responsibility, other corporations improve the welfare of a community through corporate citizenship.

Corporate Citizenship

Corporate citizenship closely relates to community relations and corporate social responsibility and is defined as a company's management of its influences on and relationships with the rest of society (Marsden, 2000). Vidaver-Cohen and Altman (2000) suggest that an organization performs corporate citizenship when business decision-makers direct members of their company, as representatives of the firm, to engage in activities that create solidarity in a community. Corporate citizenship, like community relations, relies on specific community-based programs and activities to develop relationships between an organization and its publics. Fomburn, Gardberg, and Barnett (2000) state that citizenship programs are boundary-spanning activities that acquaint employees with the organization's environment and help companies adapt to changing circumstances in the community. Certain "hands-on" corporate voluntarism, corporate citizenship, and community relations activities expose employees directly to the diverse needs and perspectives of multiple constituencies, creating increased awareness and understanding of stakeholders and the community. In turn, these voluntarism and community service projects develop altruism and lessen individualism, reducing purely self-interested activities and behaviors that create reputational risk (Fomburn, Gardberg, & Barnett, 2000). Whether corporations adhere to ethical and moral standards or engage in hands-on voluntarism, they often abide by public relations models.

Models of Public Relations

Four models of public relations guide organizations as they communicate and interact with the community. These four models include the press agency or publicity model, the public information model, the two-way asymmetric model, and the two-way symmetric model (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The press agency model relies on one-way communication between a source and a receiver. Promotions, propaganda, and lack of truthfulness characterize this model. The public information model also relies on a one-way flow of communication between a source and a receiver. It differs from the press agency model by placing great importance on truth in the

dissemination of information. The two-way asymmetric model relies on two-way imbalanced communication between a source and a receiver. It is imbalanced in its flow of communication, for the source and receiver do not equally engage in sending, receiving, and feedback of messages. The two-way symmetric model focuses on mutual understanding through balanced communication between a source and a receiver. It focuses on evaluating and understanding messages between the two bodies. Two-way models provide a means for guidance in the public relations world.

Two-way Symmetric Communication Model

According to Grunig and Hunt (1984), excellent public relations is characterized by a push toward use of a two-way symmetric communication model. The two-way symmetric model highlights strong feedback, reciprocity, and mutual understanding; all of which facilitate relationships between a corporation and its community. Donohue (1992) attributes mutual commitment and understanding to achieving satisfying and long-term working relationships with others. Public relations practitioners utilize a variety of tools to perform two-way communication in order to achieve mutual understanding. These tools include advertising, marketing, promotion, publicity, and events. Within each of these tools, public relations practitioners use press releases, news releases, research, web sites, and other instruments to communicate to large audiences. Ultimately, community relations practitioners and the corporation itself go to great lengths to develop effective tools, programs, activities, and communication systems that strengthen reciprocal relationships with the outside world.

Corporate Web Sites

Corporate web sites give organizations the opportunity to showcase their citizenship and community service activities to the local and global community. Not only can web pages inform the public on community relations efforts, but also they can communicate with and receive feedback from the public about social responsibility and citizenship activities. With this capability, corporate web sites serve a wide range of one-way and two-way communication. According to Esrock and Leichty (1998), the Internet has the potential to transform the interaction between organizations and their publics. Futurologists suggest that the Internet and the World Wide web will lead organizations to more direct communication with consumers and publics, and that informed publics will increasingly demand real information and education, thereby rejecting one-sided persuasive pitches (Weber, 1996, as cited in Esrock & Leichty, 1999). The Internet can reduce one-sided communication and put organizations and their

community of stakeholders on a more similar level of understanding and communication. For example, web pages on the Internet offer mediated and direct communication between parties through feedback features, e-mail links, chat rooms, and other interactive devices.

Tools add the special feature of interactivity to web sites serving as a facilitator of two-way communication. Esrock and Leichty (1998) suggest that e-mail, chat room, and listserv tools enable site visitors to query organizations and enable organizations to respond to an individual's questions or concerns in a proactive and timely manner. Results from their study reveal that of a select sample of Fortune 500 corporate web pages, 75% had forms of feedback and e-mail links and 48% had interactive features like search engines and site maps. Perry and Bodkin (2000), suggest that the use of interactive search capabilities and site maps indicate that corporations recognize that their corporate web site will attract multiple audiences and allow the corporation to better communicate with them. Stromer-Galley (2000) notes that the interactivity of the Internet, through hypertext, electronic surveys, video, audio, and games, allows viewers to control the medium in order for it to provide the information or entertainment they want. Hypertext, specifically, allows for a more fluid experience than with other media, such as television (p. 118). Through communication, these interactive features can help an organization to develop closer relationships with its outside publics, promoting understanding, increased interaction, and dialogue.

The use of interactive and informative tools on web sites for public relations purposes has promoted dialogic relationships between the organization and its publics. "Technology itself can neither create nor destroy relationships; rather, it is how the technology is used that influences organization-public relationships. As a dialogic medium, the Internet may be viewed as a convivial tool" (Kent & Taylor, 1998, p. 324). Kent and Taylor (1998) suggest that dialogic communication involves a relational interaction. In this relationship developed through communication, dialogue becomes an ongoing process instead of only a product. Habermas (1984) originally developed this idea by suggesting that in dialogue or communicative action, "participants are not primarily oriented to their own individual successes; they pursue their individual goals under the condition that they can harmonize their plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions" (p. 286). Dialogue involves a shared and cooperative relationship. Informing the public is just the first key to developing a strong dialogue with them. In order to foster dialogue, web sites should not only showcase information about an organization's daily activities, but also provide contact information such as pertinent addresses, telephone numbers,

and electronic mail addresses of organization members and shareholders. In general, corporate web sites should be dynamic enough to encourage all publics to view them, information rich enough to meet the needs of diverse publics, and interactive enough to allow users to build dialogic relationships through knowledge (Kent & Taylor, 1998).

Community relations engages a variety of one-way communication tools on corporate web pages to develop relationships and to showcase community support efforts. Corporate web pages display press releases, special links, annual reports, and news releases to highlight community relations programs and activities. Esrock and Leichty (2000), in a study of select Fortune 500 corporate web sites, found that 52% web pages displayed news releases, 33% displayed periodical reports or annual reports, and 33% displayed special links to other community-related articles and web pages. In all, 90% of the Fortune 500 corporations studied had a corporate web page, many devoting sections to community relations and corporate citizenship. Stromer-Galley (2000) suggests that political web pages, mainly featuring one-way communication tools, have specific functions. These functions, that apply to corporate web pages, include providing controlled, crafted information, and providing a façade of interaction through media interaction. Ultimately, one-way tools function to display information on corporate web sites.

The use of corporate web sites to display community support activities has increased over time. Esrock and Leichty (1998) discovered that of the selected Fortune 500 corporations, only 19% placed prominence on general community service or responsibility to the local community; however, 44% emphasized a particular community service or social responsibility issue on the corporate front page. Community relations material was highlighted on only 27% of the selected web site home pages with a “hot link” or gateway. In 2000, Esrock and Leichty found that 60% of the selected group of Fortune 500 corporations now had links to community and civic involvement. Increasing considerably from their first study, 44% of the corporate home pages had a “hot link” or special reference to community relations in 2000.

Additionally, research has discovered that the larger the size and budget of the corporation, the more social responsibility material existed on its corporate web page (Esrock & Leichty, 2000). Generally, size and budget corresponds directly to rank on the Fortune 500 list. Hutton, Goodman, Alexander and Genest (2001) found a significant correlation between company size and rank on the Fortune 500 list and corporate reputation and communication spending. Of the selected sample, corporations in the top Fortune 200 rank spent an average of

\$11 million each on corporate community relations and corporate communication. Corporations in the bottom ranks only spent an average of \$1 million for community relations and communication. Hutton, Goodman, Alexander and Genest (2001) suggest that corporations dedicate large expenditures on corporate communications in order to create a sort of “reputation insurance” against future crises and issues. These findings suggest that many corporations, mostly ranked by size, are increasingly highlighting community support and developing relationships with various publics in the community. The practice of highlighting community support information reaps many benefits.

Benefits of Community Relations Efforts

Corporate community relations efforts performed in the community and highlighted on corporate web pages benefit both the organization and its stakeholders. Altman (1998) believes the corporate citizenship concept paints many positive images and meanings that can benefit an organization. These include images of a corporation acting ethically, being socially responsible, and proactively furthering the interests of the community and stakeholders. Fomburn, Gardberg, and Barnett (2000) suggest that a citizenship portfolio helps integrate companies into the social environment of local communities by developing bonds between the company, its employees, and the local citizens. In addition, a citizenship portfolio helps a company build reputational capital, enhancing its ability to negotiate more attractive contracts with suppliers and government. Reputational capital, often a byproduct of community relations activities, is the market value of the company in excess of its liquidation value and its intellectual capital. It is the residual value of a company, such as its image and reputation (Fomburn, Gardberg & Bennett, 2000). Highlighting corporate citizenship efforts on web pages and actively working to better society can benefit corporations by increasing reputational capital and creating a more positive, socially responsible image of an organization.

Stakeholder Involvement

Corporate citizenship and community relations activities engage various stakeholder groups and encourage their support. According to Esrock and Leichty (2000), corporate social responsibility is a public necessity. With it, organizations are able to show they serve the general welfare, as well as the interests, of their shareholders. Community relations activities increase name recognition among consumers, encourage customer loyalty, increase employee productivity, enhance company reputation, reduce research and development costs, overcome regulatory obstacles, and create agreement among business partners (Business for Social

Responsibility; as cited in McAlister & Ferrell, 2002). Fomburn, Gardberg, and Barnett (2000) identify eight key stakeholders that may strengthen their relationships with organizations as a result of community relations efforts. These eight key stakeholders include customers, partners, employees, media, community, regulators, activists, and investors.

Customers

Customers often show loyalty to organizations through repeat purchases and recommendations if they recognize that the corporation supports local charities and service programs. Consumer studies found that 86% of consumers felt that, given equal price and quality in a product, they would be more likely to purchase a product associated with an organization that supports charity. Additionally, research has found that 74% of consumers said that they were prepared to switch brands if a similar brand was associated with a worthy cause (Adkins & Kowalska, 1997; *New Zealand Marketing Magazine*, 2000, as cited in McAlister & Ferrell, 2002). In a Walker Research Survey of 1038 consumers, 47% were found more likely to buy from a “good” company, if quality, price, and service were equal (Stodder, 1998). Furthermore, according to Cone/Ropers’s “Cause –Related Trends Report: Evolution of Cause Branding,” eight out of ten Americans are more favorable towards a company supporting a cause in which they have an interest. Two out of three Americans are more likely to trust a company associated with social causes (PR Newswire, 2000, as cited in McAlister & Ferrell, 2002). Ultimately, providing services via the World Wide Web gives customers an additional channel of communication that can reduce response time, promote customer satisfaction, and reinforce the message that a company cares about its customers (Hoger, Cappel & Myerscough, 1998). Community relations programs can help reduce the threat of customer boycotts by promoting positive images of the company involvement in social programs (Fomburn, Gardberg, & Barnett, 2000).

Partners

Citizenship programs also create opportunities for partnerships to develop and help to strengthen trust and familiarity between current partners. Often, the policies, prices, output, structure, and values of one partner organization can significantly affect the policies, prices, output, structure, and values of the other organization (Wood, 1990). Interacting together through service activities, employees and executives of partner companies develop relationships, collaboration efforts, and alliances (Fomburn, Gardberg, & Barnett, 2000).

Employees

Altman (1998) suggests that employee participation in corporate citizenship improves morale, loyalty and satisfaction. The health, morale, satisfaction, and self-esteem of employees, in turn, directly affect the survival of a corporation (Wood, 1990). Corporate volunteer programs give employees a chance to work with the community, collaborate with each other, and represent their organization. When employees interact with customers, co-workers, neighbors and friends, they display the merits and values of the company for which they work. They tend to spread the “word-of-mouth” reputation of a company. Employees, in many respects may have the highest impact on a company’s reputation and image, for they interact directly with the local community. In addition to employees serving as highly visible representatives of a corporation, the positive media visibility also works to a corporation’s advantage.

Media

The media have the ability to magnify a company’s philanthropic activities for other stakeholders. Often, corporate affiliation with charitable organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and the American Cancer Society provide the media with positive corporate images to broadcast, and generate favorable publicity for the organization (Fomburn, Gardberg, & Barnett, 2000). In many cases, corporations and the media exist in a supplier-customer relationship, benefiting each other (Wood, 1990). Corporations must develop favorable relationships with the media community through their charitable actions and cooperative dissemination of information. Corporate web sites often display press releases, speech text or audio, press kits, or information packets for the media to use. These activities and tools help the organization remain cooperative, candid, and responsible.

Community

Neighborhood groups can create a great deal of goodwill or difficulty for a company, depending on its perceived role as a citizen and neighbor (Wood, 1990, p. 88). By participating in local communities, organizations can benefit from community support and protection during times of crisis and criticism. Local communities can also serve to attract new investments and protect local companies that share their values and interests. Coca-cola, for example, focuses its social responsibility efforts on local environmental issues, where the company tends to have a considerable impact and relevant expertise (McAlister & Ferrell, 2002).

Regulators

The community directly elects councils, legislators, and other officials that serve as regulators. Government agencies interpret and execute regulatory laws, provide resources and information, offer protection from competitors both domestic and foreign, help to structure industries, fund research and development, tax corporate profits, assist in the development and promotion of new businesses, and even rescue some failing businesses (Wood, 1990, p. 85). These regulators directly influence rules, statutes and laws that will effect an organization. Through dedication to the local community, companies also display positive and conscious behaviors to regulators, creating trust and understanding (Fomburn, Gardberg, & Barnett, 2000). Whereas regulators benefit an organization through legislation, activist groups benefit an organization through education.

Activists

Activists play a useful and vital role in the life of an organization. According to Pava and Krausz (1997), an organization can learn more about its social responsibility efforts through the activities of pressure and activist groups. Activist forums, rallies, and influential actions can educate the company about particular social responsibilities. Honors given to select companies by activist groups for safety, environmental protection, philanthropy, or equal opportunity employment make an organization more distinguished and visible to consumers (Fomburn, Gardberg, & Barnett, 2000). Corporations' efforts to inform key activist groups about community relations activities through the use of technology and web pages can strengthen relationships and understanding between the two groups (Badaracco, 1998). Activists inform and educate a corporation while investors support and finance a corporation.

Investors

Investors can enhance the image and reputation capital of a corporation when they speak favorably of a company, purchase shares, and influence an upward spiral in the market value of stock. In addition to activists, investors may give awards to responsible organizations with the best annual reports (Trotman & Bradley, 1981). Bowman and Haire (1976), suggest that corporate social responsibility on the part of a company is perceived to be a sign of good management and therefore an indicator of a good investment (as cited in Trotman & Bradley, 1981). Citizenship efforts may help lower the costs of capital and enhance economic returns of a corporation (Fomburn, Gardberg, & Barnett, 2000). As various stakeholder groups diversely affect a corporation, various corporate industries acknowledge and support specific stakeholders.

Industry and Stakeholders

Previous research suggests that stakeholder acknowledgement and community relations initiatives varies by corporate industry (Bendheim, Waddock, & Graves, 1997; Smith, 1994). Bendheim, Waddock, & Graves (1997), analyzing community relations and financial data collected by the social research firm, Kinder, Lydenberg, Domini (KLD), discovered that of the selected industries, assembly, manufacturing, and human services industries regarded the community as the most important stakeholder. Consumer products and heavy labor industries valued investors as the most important stakeholder. Extraction and mining industries valued employees as the most important stakeholder. Interestingly, transportation industries valued the community, employees, and customers in equal and high amounts. Although consumer products corporations tended to value investors in higher amounts, they tended to acknowledge all stakeholder groups more than other industries. For example, Coca-Cola, General Mills, Gillette, Heinz, Merck, and Rubbermaid were among the top consumer services corporations to recognize all stakeholder groups. Within the realm of community relations, specific industries tend to support specific philanthropies and charities. Smith (1994) has discovered that industry community relations activities mirror many of the industry products, services, or goals. Specifically, the banking industry tends to support community development by assisting run down neighborhoods with charitable donations. Wells Fargo, for example, organized a national network of bankers who create low-interest loans for non-profit organizations supporting inner cities (Smith, 1994, p. 106). Print media companies tend to support literacy programs throughout the United States. Donations from media corporations fund literacy programs and support volunteer efforts to carry out the programs across the United States. Just as banking and media industries support efforts similar to their public services, insurance companies and pharmaceutical companies tend to support AIDS and other health related causes. Smith (1994) notes that insurance companies support AIDS in order to reduce claims, while pharmaceutical companies support AIDS in order to further the commercialization of AIDS drugs. Clearly, industries choose community relations activities that best fit their particular missions and goals.

As specialized industries target specific stakeholder groups, significant differences also exist between overall industry treatment of certain stakeholders. Research results suggest combined samples of industries most frequently target the community as a stakeholder. Employees were targeted at the second highest level by the selected sample of corporations. Consumers are targeted in significantly lesser amounts, while the environment is targeted the

least by the combined sample of industries (Bendheim, Waddock & Graves, 1997). Bendheim, Waddock & Graves (1997) suggest that industries target community as a stakeholder because it is easier to do “visible” activities that generate positive recognition, instead of changing operating, product, and customer relations systems. Additionally, they suggest that stakeholder targeting differs as some industries replace more reserved old-fashioned policies with more modernized stakeholder-friendly policies.

Not only do specific industries target different stakeholders, but they also differ in use of marketing, public relations, and sales tools on corporate web sites. In a study of Fortune 100 web sites, Perry and Bodkin (2000) discovered that general merchandise and communications industries were most likely to use direct marketing and communication tools on their web sites. Transportation corporations were the least likely to use direct marketing and communication tools. Results suggested that of the entire sample, few firms use the available array of marketing online communication tools to target stakeholders.

Stakeholder Targeting

The World Wide Web and the Internet allow for corporate web sites to target the eight specific stakeholder audiences. A study of Fortune 500 corporations by Esrock and Leichty (1999) found that 67% had a web site section for investors, 14% had content for dealers or retailers, 73% had sections for employees. In terms of media content, 8% had audio clips and 16% had video clips for the media. Even though a corporate site may contain primarily industry or stakeholder-specific information, the site should make an effort to include information of general value to all publics. Making information available to all publics does not discourage debate or win their approval, but allows them to engage an organization in dialogue as an informed partner (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Corporate web sites tend to employ search functions, site maps, and navigation bars as tools to help diverse publics view the information they desire. Additionally, public relations advocates will display press releases, speeches, educational programs, corporate identity materials, public-service activities, investor information, and cause-related information on the company web site to help potential stakeholders better understand the corporation (Perry & Bodkin, 2000). Esrock and Leichty (1999) discovered that sites addressing multiple audiences with special sections also tended to provide more information variety, more structural tools for navigation, and more archival collections of news information for the media and other visitors. In 1999, however, only roughly 30% of Fortune 500 corporate web sites used their sites to communicate as this type of candid, proactive, multiple-audience center of

corporate information. Technology and the Web have the potential to change the information and communication landscape, allowing greater numbers of the public to access information and know as much as the experts and organizational leaders (Badaracco, 1998). As corporations continue to use a variety of tools and display community relations information on web sites, the gap of understanding between an organization and its stakeholders may shrink.

Trends

A trend in community relations activities suggests that corporations are increasingly taking part in more “hands-on” community service and corporate citizenship activities, rather than simply donating time and money to a designated charity or philanthropy. This suggests a more “proactive” stance on community involvement, where organizations are more concerned with solving social problems in the community for which the company is not directly responsible (Pava & Krausz, 1997). Rather than being indirectly involved in social responsibility through monetary contributions, corporations are being more directly involved with the community on an on-going basis through community service. Daugherty (2000) suggests that contributions of employee time and talents provide more public relations and marketing benefits. She notes that forms of voluntarism are seen as more sincere and provide additional benefits for employees who share a unified goal outside of the workplace. Voluntarism and corporate citizenship tend to improve overall organizational moral and confidence. Community service activities and corporate citizenship activities conducted consistently create ongoing positive relationships and reputations of an organization. According to Fomburn, Gardberg & Barnett (2000), quick and one-time responses lack believability and may be seen as self-serving, actually leading to an organization’s loss of reputation and favorable image. As the trend of voluntarism increases, so too does the demand for community relations activities.

Demand for Community Relations Activities

Recently, there has been increasing demand for corporations to showcase their community relations, corporate citizenship, or corporate social responsibility activities to the public. With increasing unemployment and urban decay, the government turns to the business community to contribute relief. Both the government and the public have encouraged corporations to act responsibly by participating in and informing the public about their corporate community outreach activities, corporate philanthropy efforts, and the formulation of broad public policies (Pinkston & Carroll, 1996). A number of specific factors have affected the increase of social responsibility activities performed by a corporation and displayed on their web

sites. For example, the federal government has formalized expectations of an organization's responsibility for ethical compliance while business partners and customers have created social and ethical criteria to evaluate those with whom they conduct business (McAlister & Ferrell, 2002). Trotman and Bradley (1981) suggest other factors that influence the disclosure of social responsibility information. These include an organization's size, systematic risk, social pressures, and the management decision techniques. Ultimately, corporations are learning that the benefits of working for its stakeholders and adequately informing them on its efforts far outweigh the downfalls.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

The research in sum points to a trend of increased corporate voluntarism efforts in the community, as well as increased showcasing of citizenship and social responsibility activities on corporate web pages. Thus, this study aims to detect evidence of this trend through a content analysis of 166 systematic randomly selected web pages of Fortune 500 corporations to detect evidence of community relations functions, social responsibility, and corporate citizenship (community support). This study is a modified replication of previous research by Esrock and Leichty (1998, 2000).

As America recovers from the September 11, 2002 terrorist attacks and the financial scandals of corporations such as Enron and Worldcom, candid relationships between the corporate world and the global, national, and local communities are essential. Three hypotheses and two research questions serve as guides for this study in light of past research and these events.

H₁: The existence of community support keywords and highlights on corporate web pages has increased since the completion of the 2000 Esrock and Leichty study.

H₂: The showcasing of community support tools and programs on corporate web sites varies significantly by the industry of the corporation.

H₃: The showcasing of community support tools and programs on corporate web sites varies significantly by tiered rank on the Fortune 500 list.

RQ₁: What one-way and two-way communication tools are most prominent on Fortune 500 corporate web sites with a community support gateway?

RQ₂: Does community support program material on Fortune 500 corporate web sites differ significantly by global, national, or local community level?

As organizations refine their use of the web as a two-way public relations medium, this analysis expects to find that community support has a significant presence on the selected Fortune 500 corporate web pages by rank and community level.

Method

Content Analysis

This study examines the existence of community support public relations tools and programs on select Fortune 500 web sites. These tools serve as a function of community relations. A content analysis was conducted on a systematic random sample of 166 Fortune 500 corporate web sites to detect presence or absence of 47 select community support public relations tool and program variables. Specifically, the study analyzed one-way and two-way communication tools displayed on corporate home pages in order to develop a flow of communication with its communities. Additionally, the study analyzed human resources, financial, and policy programs displayed on corporate home pages to convey community dedication. Comparison of findings between Esrock and Leichty's (1998, 2000) previous works and this study will detect trends in community relations and corporate web page practices.

A systematic sampling procedure selected 166 corporate web pages from an official 2002 list of the Fortune 500 companies. The number three was selected at random for a starting point, with a sampling interval of three. The official list of ranked corporations is accessed at the Fortune magazine web page: www.fortune.com. Appearance of an explicit link that mentions or displays "community support" was considered a gateway. A "gateway," for this study, constitutes an explicit link or text on a home page used to guide a viewer to a particular location on a corporate web site, such as "community relations", "corporate citizenship", or simply, "community". These gateway links were followed throughout the content analysis. All material appearing as a result of the gateway link was included in the analysis. The use of a community support "gateway" intended to get an in-depth understanding of corporations that specifically target community as a key stakeholder and community support as a key function. If a community support link did not exist on the corporate home page, analysis of web site material was not conducted. Manifest content pertaining to this study included any and all web pages, tables, or links on the corporate site reached through the "gateway" of a community support link, written text, photographs, or any combination of these.

Variables

The content analysis examined the presence or absence of a set of 47

variables on selected Fortune 500 web sites. Variables were divided into a set of three categories: community support “gateway”, community support tools, and community support programs (see Codebook, Appendix 1). The category of community support tools was broken further into two divisions: one-way communication tools and two-way communication tools. The category of community support programs was broken further in to three divisions: human resources programs, financial resources programs, and policy programs. Each program division separated into three variable levels: programs at the “global” community level, programs at the “national” community level, and programs at the “local” community level.

This analysis first examined the presence or absence of a community support “gateway.” A community support “gateway” was assessed by investigating presence or absence of an explicit link relating to community support on the corporate home page. The explicit link could only include text on the home page in the form of keyword, title, advertisement, caption, or other form of readily visible writing on the home page specifically designed as a link. Explicit links had to be readily visible on the home page as text or visible on a roll-over text menu. Any explicit link or text relating to community support accessed by first “clicking” on a separate title or category did not constitute a community support “gateway” on the home page.

The analysis examined the presence or absence of seven one-way communication tools and the presence or absence of four two-way communications tools viewed through the “gateway” of community support link on the corporate home page. The seven one-way communication tools included explicit links or text, mission or values statements, press releases, news articles, annual reports, speech text or audio, and advertisements. An explicit link, for this study, served as the most basic of one-way communication tools. It was defined as a link on the corporate web site composed of written or visual text. A mission or values statement was defined as a formal statement describing the mission of the company and the principles, standards, qualities, values, morals, ethics, or services that it deems worthwhile, desirable, important, or necessary. A press release, for this study, was considered a formal statement submitted by the corporation to the media. Keywords relating to press releases, such as “news release,” and simply “release” were also accepted. Whereas some corporations choose to display press releases to inform the community, other corporations choose to display news articles published by the media. A news article was defined as a formal statement written by the media about the corporation. Possible examples included material published in a newspaper, web site, journal, magazine, or book. Phrases relating to news articles such as “news updates,” “recent news,” or

simply “news” were also accepted. Press releases and news articles serve as generally small tools to inform the public; however, annual reports serve as large-scale one-way tools to inform the public. Annual reports included a formal report submitted by the corporation to its stockholders. It may contain letters to the shareholders, information on earnings and financial status, information and lists of the corporation’s products and services, and a review of community relations activities. Speech text or audio was defined as full-length or abridged speech text in written or audio form. In addition to speech text or audio, advertisements serve as an informative tool. An advertisement was defined as a paid announcement or display on the corporate web site designed to attract public attention. An additional category entitled “other” was created to track presence or absence of additional or unique one-way communication tools on corporate web sites. Each one-way communication tool was assessed by presence or absence on each Fortune 500 corporate web site.

The four two-way communication tools include chat room, two-way listserv, e-mail, and poll or survey. A chat room was defined as any software, explicit page, or pop-up screen providing the community with capabilities to communicate simultaneously with members of the corporation or members of the public. As chat rooms provide a synchronous form of two-way communication, listservs provide a more asynchronous form of two-way communication. A listserv was described as an enhanced e-mail service where the public can be continuously informed about the corporation by sending e-mails, posting questions and commentary, and submitting responses to e-mails and commentary. Simpler than a listserv, an e-mail function was defined as a tool on a corporate web site allowing a viewer to contact the corporation in writing. While e-mail serves as a two-way tool for the community to question and solicit its corporation, a poll or survey serves as a two-way tool for the corporation to solicit its community. An additional category entitled “other” was created to track presence or absence of additional or unique two-way communication tools on corporate web sites. Each two-way communication tool was assessed by presence or absence on each Fortune 500 web site.

This analysis examined presence or absence of (a) five human resources community support programs in the global, national, and local community levels, (b) the presence or absence of three financial resources community support programs in the global, national, and local community levels, and (c) the presence or absence of one thought community support program in the global, national and local community levels. Each community support level received a specific definition (see Codebook, Appendix 1). A global program was defined as any program

implemented in continents or countries outside the corporate “home” country. A national program was defined as any program implemented within sections of the country in which the corporation resides. A local program was defined as any program implemented within the neighborhood, community, district, county, or state in which the corporation resides. Each human resources, financial resources, and policy community support program was assessed by presence or absence at each of the three levels.

The five human resources community support programs include voluntarism, consulting, citizenship, internships, and partnerships. Voluntarism was defined as a program related to the use of or reliance on voluntary action to maintain an institution or serve the community. Examples of voluntarism include corporate employees building homes through Habitat for Humanity, corporate employees cleaning trash from a park or highway, or employees providing services to another organization, such as the YMCA, free of charge. Corporations also take part in consulting programs. For this study, consulting was described as a program related to the giving of advice or information to the community. Often, corporate employees serve as a consultant or aide at universities, forums, or organizations. Closely related to voluntarism, citizenship was defined as a program related to the performing of aid and services to the community. Whereas voluntarism is viewed as a generous donation of services, citizenship may be viewed as a corporate duty or moral obligation. Corporations also provide internship opportunities for students and prospective employees. An internship was recognized as a program related to the supervised practical training of students or post-graduates within the company. In addition to working with students, corporations also work with other organizations for the good of the community. For this study, a partnership was described as a program uniting two corporations or organizations with the similar goal, mission, or need to volunteer time, money, or thought to the community. An additional category entitled “other” was added at each level to track presence or absence of additional human resources programs. All human resources programs were assessed for presence or absence on each of the selected Fortune 500 corporate web sites.

The three financial resources community support programs include economic development, sponsorship, and philanthropy/charity. An economic development program was defined as a program related to the financial support of a community’s production of services and goods and the giving of financial aid to businesses throughout the community. In addition to providing support to businesses, corporations may also choose to sponsor community programs.

Sponsorship was described as a program financing a project or event carried out by another person or group. For example, many corporations choose to sponsor marathons, telethons, or tournaments in the community. Philanthropy and charity was described as a program, effort, or inclination to increase the well being of the community by charitable aid or monetary donations. Whereas sponsorship is dedicated to a one-time event, philanthropy may apply to long-term needs of a community. Corporations engage in philanthropy by donating financial support to universities, organizations, people, or programs in the community. An additional category entitled “other” was added at each level to track presence or absence of additional financial resources programs. All financial services programs were assessed by presence or absence on each of the selected Fortune 500 web sites.

The policy or “thought” community support program entitled decision making was assessed at each level by presence or absence of explicit text or links on the corporate web site. It was defined as any program involved in the creation of legislation, public law, or regulation of the community. An additional category entitled “other” was added at each level to track presence or absence of additional thought community support programs.

Coding Procedure

A standard coding sheet was used when viewing each web site. Before detecting presence or absence of the 47 variables, the coder recorded descriptive information for each corporate web site. The name, rank, and industry of each corporation were recorded on the standard coding sheet. Eight industry divisions included technology (coded as 1), health care (coded as 2), retail (coded as 3), banking (coded as 4), communications (coded as 5), energy (coded as 6), insurance (coded as 7), and “other” (coded as 8). Existence of the 42 variables was recorded on a standard coding sheet for the 166 selected Fortune 500 web sites (see Codesheet, Appendix 2). The coder used a set of 1s and 0s to note presence or absence, respectively, of each community support variable. Category coding was completed for all information and links accessed through the community support gateway link.

After completion of the data collecting process, data was entered into the SPSS statistical software program. Frequency calculations, Chi Square and crosstabs tests used to compare and analyze the presence of community support text, tools, and programs on the selected Fortune 500 corporate web sites.

Results

The three hypotheses and two research questions guiding this content analysis are explored individually throughout the results section. Frequencies and cross tabulations give a detailed assessment of community support information on corporate web sites in 2003.

Community Support Gateway

Building off of previous research, Hypothesis 1 predicted that in 2003 there would be an increase of community support presence on Fortune 500 corporate web pages as compared to studies from 1998 and 2000.

In order to assess community support presence, the gateway links were assessed for all 166 web sites included in this study. The results show that community support presence on Fortune 500 corporate home pages actually decreased since the last comprehensive study of this nature.

Overall findings reveal that community support highlights on Fortune 500 corporate home pages have decreased 9.1% since 2000. In 2000, Esrock and Leichty found that 44% of the Fortune 500 corporate home pages in the selected sample had links to community relations and civic involvement. Of the 166 Fortune 500 corporate web sites viewed in this study, only 34.9% (58) utilized a community support “gateway” on the corporate home page. Common terms designating a community support gateway on corporate web site home pages included “Community Involvement” (Home Depot, Valero Energy, Kimberly-Clark), “Corporate Citizenship” or “Corporate Responsibility” (General Motors, SBC Communications, MetLife, PepsiCo, Bristol Meyers Squibb, Coca-Cola, Pharmacia, Tribune, Praxair, Radio Shack, Willamette Industries), and simply “Community” (Allstate, Visteon, Abbott Laboratories, Fleming, Household International, Edison International, Williams, PSEG, Ashland, Ameren).

Interestingly, however, patterned analysis by tiered rank (top, middle, bottom thirds) demonstrates that the trend of community support presence on home pages may be increasing among the top ranked companies. For example, as Table 1 illustrates, corporations in the top third tiered rank on the Fortune 500 list exhibited a community support gateway on 54.5% of corporate web sites. Only 29.1% of corporations in the middle rank and 21.4% of corporations in the bottom rank utilized a community support gateway.

Industry Breakdown and Community Support Gateway

Building off of previous research as well, Hypothesis 2 predicted that community support gateway presence would differ significantly by industry. Results did not support Hypothesis 2,

as no statistically significant differences were detected for industry showcasing of community support. Community support gateway presence did occur on a considerable amount of corporate web sites in each industry division, as illustrated by Table 2. The industry with the largest percentage of corporate web sites with a gateway was the energy industry. A community support gateway appeared on 9 out of 15 (60.0%) of the selected sample of Fortune 500 corporate web sites. The healthcare, retail, banking, and communications industries had similar presence of a community support gateway on the corporate web site. A community support gateway appeared on 40.0% of health care industry sites, 34.3% of retail industry sites, 36.8% of banking industry sites, and on 36.4% of communication industry sites. Although technology corporations yielded the largest subsample of corporate web sites (55), it displayed the lowest presence of community support gateway material. The technology industry only showcased community support material on 29.0% (16) of the selected sample of corporate web sites. Presence of insurance and “other” industries was too low to compare using statistical calculations.

One-Way Communication Tools and Tiered Rank

Hypothesis 3 predicted that appearance of community support public relations tools and community support programs would differ significantly by rank. In order to assess presence of tools and programs by tiered rank, all material resulting from the community support gateway link was analyzed in this study. Results show mixed support for hypothesis 3 and verify that certain one-way communication tools do differ significantly by tiered rank (see Table 3). Although many of the individual community support tool analyses failed to produce statistically significant differences, percentages of presence and absence show a clear difference by tiered rank. Explicit links and text resulted in the only significantly different presence on corporate web pages by rank $X^2(2, N=166) = 13.06, p \leq .001$. The top third of corporate web pages ranked by revenue on the Fortune 500 list displayed explicit links regarding community support on 52.8% of the web pages. Explicit links appeared on 29.1% of corporate web pages ranked in the middle third. In the bottom third, explicit links appeared on only 21.4% of the corporate web pages. Although the other one-way tools had considerable presence on the corporate web sites, they did not differ significantly by tiered rank. Mirroring the frequency results, mission statements, press releases, news articles, and “other” one-way tools had considerable presence on corporate web sites, especially at the top third level. Annual reports, speeches, and advertisements had considerably less presence on corporate web sites, especially at the middle third and bottom third ranks.

Two-Way Communication Tools and Tiered Rank

Results indicate, however, that use of two-way tools on the entire sample of Fortune 500 corporate web pages did not differ statistically by rank. As Table 4 illustrates, none of the five two-way tool categories produced significantly different results by tiered rank. Overall two-way tool presence was especially minimal, and in some cases, non-existent. Poll presence, although weak, did have a considerably varied presence by tiered rank. Poll or surveys appeared on only 7.3% of corporate web sites ranked in the top third. Polls or surveys did not appear on corporate web sites ranked in the middle and bottom thirds on the Fortune 500 list. Although presence of the e-mail function did not differ significantly by tiered rank, it did have considerable presence at every ranking level. Presence of an e-mail tool appeared on 29.1% of corporate web sites in the top third, on 20.0% of corporate web sites in the middle third, and on 12.5% of the corporate web sites in the bottom third. Chat and listserv tools had no presence on corporate web sites at any ranking level. Two-way communication tools entitled “other” only occurred on the selected sample of corporate web sites in the top third at a presence of .6%.

Human Resources Programs and Tiered Rank

Supporting Hypothesis 3, national voluntarism, local voluntarism, and local partnership human resources programs produced significantly different results by tiered rank on the Fortune 500 list, as illustrated by Table 5. Voluntarism at the national and local levels produced the largest statistically significant difference by rank $X^2(2, N=166)=16.99, p \leq .001$ and $X^2(2, N=166)=18.04, p \leq .001$, respectively. In the top third rank, voluntarism at the national level appeared on 32.7% of the entire sample of corporate web pages. In the middle third rank, voluntarism at the national level appeared on only 10.9% of the entire sample of web pages. Showcasing of voluntarism decreased considerably again at the bottom third of Fortune 500 corporations. National voluntarism at the third tier appeared on only 5.4% of the sample of corporate web sites. In addition to national voluntarism programs, local voluntarism program presence on Fortune 500 corporate web sites displayed highly statistically significant differences. In the top third, local voluntarism appeared on 41.8% of the selected web sites. In the middle third, local voluntarism support programs appeared on 18.2% of the selected web sites. Local voluntarism programs appeared on 8.9% of corporate web sites in the bottom third. Partnership at the local level was the third human resources program that produced significantly different results by tiered rank $X^2(2, N=166) = 6.32, p \leq .05$. Local partnership information appeared on 20.0% of the top third in the entire sample of web sites. In the middle third, local partnership

material appeared on 9.1% of the entire sample. In the bottom third, local partnerships appeared on only 5.4% of the entire sample of corporate web sites. As Table 5 shows, the top third tier was more likely or equally likely to exhibit community support programs on the local, national, and global level in every case except emphasis in global partnerships.

Although program presence did not produce significantly different results through Chi Square tests, consulting at the local level, citizenship at the local level, and partnership at the national level produced a considerably strong and variable presence at each tiered level. Local consulting produced fairly strong results at the top third and middle third ranks. In the top third, consulting at the local level appeared on 10.9% of the entire sample of corporate web sites. Local consulting in the middle third appeared on 5.5% of the entire sample of corporate sites. Local consulting in the bottom third decreased to appearance on only 1.8% of the sample of Fortune 500 corporate web sites. Citizenship at the local level produced strong results by tiered rank as well. Local citizenship appeared on 18.2% of corporate web sites in the top third. In the middle third, citizenship at the local level appeared on 7.3% of the entire sample of web sites. In the bottom third, local citizenship appearance decreased only .2%, appearing on 7.1% of the entire sample of corporate web sites. Practically mirroring partnership at the local level, partnership at the national level produced strong results at each tiered rank. National partnership appeared on 20.0% of the top third, on 10.9% of the middle third, and on 5.4% of the bottom third of the entire sample of the corporate web pages. Although results for national partnership were not statistically significant, partnership at the national level actually occurred 1.8% more than partnership at the local level in the middle third of corporate web sites.

As a variety of human resources programs produced strong or statistically significant results by tiered rank, consulting at the global level, consulting at the national level, and internship at the global level produced considerably weak results and displayed very low presence. Consulting at the global level had the lowest presence overall on corporate web sites at each tiered rank. Global consulting appeared on only 1.8% of corporate web sites in the top third. Consulting at the global level did not appear on web sites in the middle third or bottom third of corporate web sites on the Fortune 500 list. Although consulting at the national level appeared at a stronger rate than consulting at the global level, its presence by tiered rank remained considerably low, especially in the bottom third. National consulting appeared on only 3.6% of the entire corporate web site sample in the top third. Consulting at the national level appeared on only 1.8% of the entire sample of web sites in the middle third. In the bottom third,

corporate web sites did not display participation in consulting at the national level. Internship at the global level also had very low presence at each tiered rank. Global internship only appeared on 3.6% of the entire sample of corporate web sites. Internship at the global level did not appear on web sites in the middle third or bottom third on the Fortune 500 ranking system list.

Financial Resources Programs and Tiered Rank

Of the ten financial resources programs and levels, five programs produced significantly different results by tiered rank, further supporting Hypothesis 3 (see Table 6). Economic development at the local level, sponsorship at the local level, and philanthropy at the global, national, and local levels level produced significantly different results by rank. Local economic development material on corporate web sites varied significantly by rank $X^2(2, N=166) = 16.29, p \leq .001$. At the local level, economic development appeared on 23.6% of web sites in the top third of the corporate web site sample. In the middle third, local economic development appeared on 9.1% of the entire sample of corporate sites. Corporations in the bottom third did not display local economic development material on their web sites. In addition to economic development at the local level, sponsorship at the local level produced significantly different results by tiered rank $X^2(2, N=166) = 14.41, p \leq .001$. Sponsorship at the local level appeared on 21.8% of corporate web sites in the top third. Local sponsorship appeared on only 1.8% of corporate web sites in the middle third. In the bottom third, local sponsorship increased, appearing on 5.4% of the selected Fortune 500 corporate web sites. National philanthropy also produced significantly different results by tiered rank $X^2(2, N=166) = 18.15, p \leq .001$. In the top third, national philanthropy appeared on 45.5% of the selected sample of corporate web sites. In the middle third, national philanthropy appeared on 18.2% of corporate web sites. Philanthropy at the national level dropped to an appearance rate of 12.5% on corporate web sites in the bottom third. While local economic development, local sponsorship, and national sponsorship produced statistically significant results at the $p \leq .005$ level, global philanthropy and local philanthropy statistically significant differences were also noted.

Local philanthropy and global philanthropy financial resources programs produced statistically significant results at the $p \leq .01$ and $p \leq .05$ levels. Local philanthropy produced visibly significant results by tiered rank $X^2(2, N=166) = 12.86, p \leq .01$. Philanthropy at the local level appeared on 50.9% of the selected sample of corporate web sites in the top third rank. Philanthropy at the local level appeared on 25.5% of corporate web sites in the middle third rank. In the bottom third rank, local philanthropy material appeared on 21.4% of corporate web sites.

Philanthropy at the global level produced statistically significant results by tiered rank X^2 (2, $N=166$) = 7.24, $p \leq .05$. In the top third, global philanthropy appeared on 20.0% of the sample of corporate web sites. In the middle third, global philanthropy appeared on 7.3% of the corporate web site sample. Philanthropy at the global level appeared on only 5.4% in the bottom third of the corporate web site sample.

Global economic development, national economic development, global sponsorship, and financial resources programs entitled “other” did not produce statistically significant results by tiered rank. Their presence on the selected sample of corporate web sites was particularly weak. For example, economic development material at the global level appeared on only 1.8% of corporate sites in the top third rank, and did not appear on corporate web sites in the middle and bottom third ranks. Global sponsorship programs appeared on 7.3% of web sites in the top third, decreased to 0.0% presence in the middle third, and then rose to 3.6% presence in the bottom third. Financial resources programs entitled “other” did not appear at all on the selected sample of ranked corporate web sites. Whereas communication tools and community support programs produced statistically significant results, industry breakdown in relation to community support did not produce statistically significant results.

One-Way Tools

This analysis reflects the 58 Fortune 500 companies with an explicit community support gateway on their home page.

As current models of excellent public relations stress the need for increased use of two-way communication, Research Question 1 explored general presence of one-way and two-way tools on Fortune 500 web sites accessed through a community support gateway. Results indicate that one-way tools including explicit links, mission statements, press releases, and “other” forms of one-way tools appeared most frequently on web sites sampled from Fortune 500 corporations (see Table 7). Each web site displayed a form of a community support explicit link or text. Web sites showcasing an explicit link accounted for 100% of the 58 corporations with a gateway. Less than half of the corporations with a community support gateway displayed a mission statement on their corporate web site. Mission statements appeared on only 46.6% of the 58 corporations. Similarly, press releases appeared on only 46.6% of the 58 corporate sites with a gateway. Unique or additional one-way tools had a fairly significant presence on the Fortune 500 web sites with a gateway. Of the corporations with a gateway, 39 or 67.2% of the 58 corporate sites had some additional form of one-way tool. These unique tools included a

special event, an e-mail alert system, an online newsletter, a personal letter from a corporate officer, an online press kit, a special report, personal testimonials, feature stories, an online code of ethics, a web cast or video, an online fact sheet, and an online brochure.

News articles, annual reports, speeches, and advertisements had minimal presence within a community support gateway on the Fortune 500 web sites. News articles appeared on 34.5% of the 58 corporate web sites with a gateway. Annual reports appeared on 20.7% of the 58 corporate web sites. 27.6% of the 58 corporate sites with a gateway displayed speech audio or text. Advertisements had the smallest presence on the selected corporate web sites, accounting for only 10.3% of the community support gateway sites. As certain one-way communications tools appeared more than others, two-way communications tools on the Fortune 500 web sites also appeared in varying amounts.

Two-Way Tools

Results regarding RQ1 indicate that two-way e-mail functions, in comparison with other two-way tools, had a significantly strong presence on the Fortune 500 corporations (see Table 7). E-mail functions, by far, were the most prominent two-way communication tool used on Fortune 500 corporate web sites. E-mail tools appeared on 58.6% of the 58 corporate web sites with a community support gateway. Polls or surveys and “other” two-way tools had very minimal presence on the selected corporate web sites. Polls and survey tools accounted for only 6.9% of corporate web sites. Unique or “other” two-way tools accounted for only 1.7% of the corporate web sites with a community support gateway. Interestingly, two-way chat rooms and listservs had a 0% presence on corporate web sites with a community support gateway.

Community Support Programs at the Global, National, and Local Level

Research Question 2 explores presence of community support programs at various community levels. In order to assess community support program presence at the global, national, and local levels, all material accessed through a community support gateway on the corporate home page was viewed. Table 8 offers a detailed frequency analysis of human resources, financial resources, and policy community support programs at each community level. Results indicate that community support programs have the most significant presence at the local level, less presence at the national level, and minimal presence at the global level.

Human Resources Programs

The human resources program entitled voluntarism had the most significant presence at the global, national, and local level on Fortune 500 corporate web sites. Voluntarism at the

global level appeared on 15.5% of the 58 corporate sites with a community support gateway. Voluntarism at the national level appeared on 46.6% of the 58 corporate web sites. At the local level, voluntarism occurred on 65.5% of the 58 sites. Partnerships ranked second in overall presence on Fortune 500 corporate web pages. At the global level, partnerships appeared on 8.6% of community support gateway web sites. At the national level, partnerships appeared on 34.5% of corporate web sites with a community support gateway. Partnerships at the local level occurred on 32.8% of corporate web sites. Mention of corporate citizenship programs ranked third on the sample of corporate web sites utilizing a community support gateway. Citizenship at the global level occurred on 8.6% of community support gateway web sites. Citizenship at the national level occurred on 15.5% of corporate sites with a gateway. Citizenship at the local level occurred on 31.0% of web sites. Whereas voluntarism, partnerships and internships occurred at considerable levels on the Fortune 500 web pages, internships, consulting, and human resources programs entitled “other” did not occur at considerable levels.

Internships, consulting, and “other” human resources programs displayed weak presence on Fortune 500 corporate sites. Internships at the global level occurred on only 3.4% of community support gateway web sites. Internships at the national level occurred on 10.3% of the 58 sites. At the local level, internships remained steady with a 10.3% presence on gateway web sites. Mention of consulting appeared at even smaller rates on the global and national levels, but larger rates on the local level. At the global level, consulting appeared on only 1.7% of the 58 corporate sites. At the national level, consulting appeared on 5.2% of community support gateway sites. Improving at the local level, consulting appeared on 17.2% of corporate web sites. Human resources programs entitled “other” had very minimal presence on the sample of corporate web pages. Other programs appeared on only 1.7% of gateway web pages at the global level, 6.9% of gateway web pages at the national level, and 8.6% of gateway web pages at the local level. Financial resources programs were similar in presence to human resources programs, for they had varied presence on the entire sample of Fortune 500 corporate web pages.

Financial Resources Programs

Select financial resources programs displayed prominence on the select Fortune 500 corporate web sites. Philanthropy and charity as a financial resources program had the most significant presence of the selected sample. At the global level, philanthropy appeared on 31.0% of community support gateway web sites. At the national level, philanthropy occurred on 72.4% of corporate web sites. Philanthropy at the local level occurred on a considerable 93.1% of the

sites. Mention of sponsorship on corporate web sites had a considerably smaller presence. Sponsorship appeared on only 10.3% of support gateway web pages at the global level, on 24.1% of the gateway web pages at the national level, and on 27.6% of the gateway web pages at the local level. Economic development occurred considerably less than sponsorship at the global and national levels, but occurred more at the local level. At the global level, economic development appeared on only 1.7% of gateway web sites. At the national level, economic development appeared on 13.8% of the 58 sites. At the local level, presence of economic development appeared on 31.0% of the corporate sites with a gateway, surpassing presence of sponsorship. Presence of financial resources programs entitled “other” did not appear on the selected sample of Fortune 500 corporate web pages.

Thought and Policy Programs

Mention of decision making on the selected Fortune 500 corporate web pages had a very minimal presence. Decision making appeared on only 1.7% of web sites at the global level, on only 8.6% of web sites at the national level, and on only 12.1% of web sites at the local level. Presence of thought programs entitled “other” did not appear on the selected sample of Fortune 500 corporate web pages.

Discussion

Results of this content analysis provide a strong analysis of community support material on Fortune 500 web sites in 2003. Findings from this study provide insight into the lack of community support on Fortune 500 web sites. The findings allow researchers to prescribe ways to improve community support existence on corporate web sites and recommend future study regarding community support.

Community Support Gateway

Results indicate that community support gateway presence on Fortune 500 corporate home pages dropped an estimated 9.1% since 2000. This suggests that in the wake of September 11, 2001 and several corporate financial scandals, corporations have not sufficiently used web sites as vehicles to present evidence of strengthened relationships with the community. Smith (1994) cited economic recession as the culprit for the decline in corporate philanthropy in the early 90's. He found that highly visible corporations such as Boeing and Hallmark significantly cut philanthropy budgets. It appears as if the post-September 11, 2001 and corporate scandal era has triggered another sharp decrease in the nation's economy and a lessened faith in corporate stock. Perhaps as the economy has slowed, corporations have begun to focus more attention on

maintaining a healthy financial status. Therefore, as a need for corporations to show they value the community as a stakeholder has increased, so too has a need for corporations to foster healthy relationships with investors. This possible push to maintain healthy relationships with investors may have overshadowed a progression to maintain strong support for the community.

As a result of financial scandals such as Enron and Worldcom, corporations face increased economic demand for internal auditing, adjustment, and development. A directed focus toward the internal practices and structure of the corporation may also play a role in the lack of community support efforts. Because corporations are currently engaged in extensive internal audits, having neither the funding nor the manpower to carry out community support, they may have chosen to curb community relations efforts. Wood (1990) explains that many businesses simply cannot afford to engage in socially responsible activities. They must use any “excess” profits for research and development, technological upgrades, expansion of productive capacity, marketing, and other activities vital to the organization’s economic growth and viability (p. 123). As a result, many corporations may have erased community relations material from the corporate web site altogether.

Industry and Community Support

As each corporate industry serves a highly specific purpose such as developing new technologies, distributing products, or investing and saving money, it was expected that each industry would also target the community in highly different ways. Results indicate, however, that community support material displayed on Fortune 500 corporate web sites did not differ significantly by industry. Among all corporate industries, the energy industry displayed community support considerably more than other corporations. Community support information appeared on 60.0% of energy corporate web sites. Perhaps energy corporations place more significance on community support than other industries because they provide such vital and direct services to the community. Energy corporations provide local communities with energy to fuel their businesses and homes and allow communities to live comfortably with heat and light. Energy corporations also have an immense impact on the environment of a local community. Chemical emissions may pollute land, water, or air, while the damming of lakes, streams, and rivers can severely alter the landscape. Northeast Utilities, for example, informs and involves the community on its web site through the use of two community support gateways and links to stewardship, grants, partnerships, and environmental safety performance reports. A live web cast of a local family of eagles in the Northeast Utilities community completed the social

responsibility content of the web site. Clearly, some energy corporations have many methods of showing community support.

All remaining corporate industries displayed community support in similar amounts. Community support appeared on 29.1% to 40.0% of all other industry web sites. These findings suggest that all corporate industries place importance on the community as a stakeholder in equal levels, even though they may serve the community in very different ways.

Due to economic reasons, several industries, such as the airline industry, may have faced the need to halt community support efforts after September 11, 2001. Selected industries displayed community support through a gateway, but indicated that they were unable to provide community support at that time. For example, Continental Airlines displayed a community support gateway entitled “Community Service.” When the community service web page was accessed, however, a notice stated that community service was a concern, but the corporation was presently unable to take part in it. Notices showing that corporations consider the community a priority even though they are unable to perform community support serve as a valuable community relations function. Simply stated, any community support link is better than no community support link. A single link showing community support, though minimal, still reminds visitors that corporations value the community as a stakeholder. Furthermore, links stressing concern may encourage site viewers to revisit community support pages to track the community support progress of a corporation over time.

Tiered Rank and Community Support

Results confirm previous findings that community support on corporate web pages differs significantly by rank. Specifically, the higher the corporation appears on the Fortune 500 list, the more community support information will appear on its web site. Interestingly, this content analysis discovered that the top third of corporate sites on the Fortune 500 list displayed 25% more community support information than the middle third, and over 33% more community support information than the bottom third. For example, General Motors, a technology and retail corporation ranked third on the Fortune 500 corporate list, displayed 23 different community support variables. These support features included links, values statements, press releases, news articles, annual reports, speech text and audio, special events, e-mails, voluntarism, citizenship, partnership, economic development, sponsorship, philanthropy, and legislative decision-making. In contrast, Computer Associates International, a technology corporation ranked 387 on the Fortune 500 list, was the lowest-ranking technology corporation to still display a community

support link. On its corporate web site, Computer Associates International displayed a total of 11 different community support variables. These support features included links, press releases, e-mail, voluntarism, partnerships, and philanthropy. Clearly, lower-ranking corporations still display community support, but in considerably smaller amounts. These findings suggest that corporations large in size and annual revenue may have greater means to support their community and display those efforts on corporate web sites.

Communication Tools

One-way and two-way communication tool presence on the selected Fortune 500 corporate web sites was surprisingly weak. Each one-way tool variable appeared on less than half of the corporate web sites with a community support gateway. Besides an e-mail function, each two-way tool occurred on less than 7.0% of the corporate web sites with a community support gateway. Although an e-mail function appeared on 58% of the corporate gateway sites, its presence, in comparison to the general availability of e-mail to the public, is considerably low. Two-way tool functions, chat rooms and listservs, did not appear at all.

Research related to political campaign web sites may explain why corporate web sites display such an absence of two-way communication tools. Stromer-Galley (2000), suggests three reasons why candidates avoid two-way communication on web sites. Candidates tend to avoid two-way communication because it is too burdensome to the campaign, it lessens control of the communication environment, and it reduces the ambiguous nature of campaign discourse (p. 122). Specifically, two-way communication functions are too burdensome because they require around-the-clock monitoring of chat rooms, e-mail servers, and listservs. In the final weeks of a campaign, candidates may receive 600 to 700 e-mails a day. Corporations, in the heat of an important issue or development, may also receive hundreds to thousands of e-mails from concerned or angry stakeholders. It would be a daunting or even impossible task for corporate community relations officers to respond to e-mails in a timely manner. Two-way communication functions, according to Stromer-Galley (2000), create loss of control because site visitors would have full opportunity to post controversial, anti-corporate, or inappropriate comments to web boards, listservs, and chat rooms for the entire public to see. Censorship of messages to these functions would be too difficult to perform and the influx of such messages would be too difficult to control. Two-way functions also trigger a loss of ambiguity on campaign web sites. With a loss of ambiguity on a corporate site, media and stakeholders may

focus on specifics and inconsistencies, rather than understand general goals, missions, and activities of an organization.

The low presence of one-way tools and non-existence of certain two-way tools suggests that corporate web sites serve the purpose of informing the community; much like the publicity and public information models of public relations. Grunig and Hunt (1984) and Kent and Taylor (1998) advise that excellent public relations and community relations should, however, involve use of the two-way symmetrical model of public relations and promote a dialogue between the corporation and the public. Perhaps implementation of certain e-mail, chat room, or a two-way listserv functions on Fortune 500 web sites, although cumbersome and time-consuming, would significantly increase the potential of a corporation to foster a strong dialogic relationship with its local, national, and global publics. Nevertheless, Stromer-Galley's (2000) argument regarding dangers of loss of control make prospects of an un-mediated or corporation-policed two-way public communication tool appear unlikely.

Community Level and Community Support

Results indicate that community support displayed on Fortune 500 corporate web pages occurs at the local level considerably more than at the global and national level. In many cases, community support doubles or triples in strength at the local level, especially when compared to the global level. For example, local community philanthropy and charity on the selected sample of Fortune 500 web sites occurred 62.1% more than global philanthropy and charity. Similarly, local voluntarism occurred 50.0% more than global voluntarism, local economic development occurred 29.3% more than global economic development, and local decision making occurred 10.4% more than global decision making. These results suggest that corporations consider their local community the most important public in need of community support. Perhaps community support increases at the local level because the corporation's employees and families, the environment in which the corporation works, and opportunities for meaningful community support all exist more visibly in the local community.

Although this study indicates that local community support levels have the most significant presence on corporate web sites, current research and vocabulary in corporate behavior suggests that global community support may increase. As early as 1994, trends suggested an increase in global community relations by Fortune 500 corporations. Smith (1994), citing research conducted through the Center For Corporate Community Relations at Boston College, states that "now that most of their profits are made abroad, those companies see

philanthropy as the best means of building friendships with government leaders, overcoming regulatory hurdles, capturing the imagination of the emerging middle classes, and opening a dialogue with host communities about how companies can meet their needs” (p. 112).

Additionally, as the term “global marketplace” earns its place in the daily vocabulary of corporate leaders, perhaps the terms global community support and national community support will also gain significance. With advances in technology and the Internet, corporations have the capability to communicate, interact, and conduct business with stakeholders and the community across the globe. Community relations efforts, as a form of community support, has the potential, through web sites, to create a vital link between a corporation and its local, national, and global publics.

Recommendation

Results confirming the lack of two-way communication tools and decreased presence of community relations efforts on corporate web sites beg the question: How can corporations implement two-way communication and community support tools on web sites without compromising strategic positioning and reputation? Corporations may increase a two-way communication flow and community support material on web sites through increased research and evaluation, choosing the best public relations model for the corporate needs, and implementing a variety of asynchronous and synchronous tools.

Through research and evaluation of a corporation’s communication needs, goals, and values, corporate community relations practitioners and corporate executive officers alike can increase the potential for meaningful two-way relationships with stakeholders. Smith (1994) suggests that in order to increase corporate community relations and philanthropy, corporate officers must research, test, evaluate, and revise community support measures. By implementing an ever-evolving research and evaluation process, corporate community relations officers can discover tools, programs, and activities that work best for the community in which the corporation resides.

In order to foster community support and a healthy communication flow, corporations must choose a public relations model that best fits the organizational values, structure, and community relations goals. Leichty and Springston (1993) and Donohue (1992) suggest that an appropriate public relations model will build mutual trust and develop exchange to a point where cooperative problem solving is possible. They advise that in some cases, it may not be appropriate for a corporation to implement a two-way communication or integrative negotiation

model. In the event that ample time, resources, communication skills, mutual trust, or common interests are absent, it may be best to employ non two-way communicative functions. The employment of two-way communicative tools in the absence of supportive features like time and trust, may only create frustration, exploitation, and inaction. Ultimately, the use of any communication model, whether one-way or two-way, should encourage greater understanding, constructive feedback, and a healthy evolution in the corporate-stakeholder relationship.

Certain tools offer more symmetrical two-way communication than others, creating a natural progression for corporations to follow if they choose to utilize two-way tools. Stromer-Galley (2000) cites time as a key influence in the implementation or absence of two-way functions on web sites. She explains that online, time tends to “shrink.” Citizens learn to expect responses quickly and may respond to feedback within minutes. An increase in response-time expectations may call for corporations to develop new modes of communication and employ various representatives to maintain these new communication tools. If corporations choose to implement a two-way communication flow with the community, they may choose to do so by first implementing simple asynchronous two-way communication tools such as e-mail. After e-mail has developed a base communication flow, corporations could next implement a listserv. Lastly, chat rooms allowing a synchronous flow of communication between corporate officers and the community could be implemented. The public could be informed of these chat rooms and scheduled chat sessions on the corporate home page. For example, a gateway link on a fictitious corporate home page entitled “American Technology Corporation in the Community - Chat at 7:00 p.m. Friday, April 4, 2003” would pique the interests of web page viewers and encourage them to participate in a dialogue with the corporation. This incremental implementation of various tools would allow for ample research and evaluation into which tools work best for the corporation’s needs. Because web sites and online communication tools allow global, national, and local citizens to share ideas, the corporation could benefit from increased diversity of thought and a larger span of corporate recognition.

Limitations

There are several limitations and considerations with this study. Limitations and areas of improvement included the definition of a community support gateway, definition of each industry, coder reliability, and lack of sufficient variable presence.

This content analysis abided by a very conservative and strict definition of a community support gateway. A community support gateway was interpreted as an explicit link or text on a

home page used to guide a viewer to a particular location on a corporate web site. Only keywords specifically relating to community support, such as “community relations,” “community support,” “community service,” “community,” “philanthropy,” or “citizenship” were viewed as true community support gateways. Links or gateways such as “investor relations,” “corporate information,” or “customer service,” were not viewed as true community support gateways. Additionally, text or links on a home page referring indirectly to a community support program or tool were not used. For example, Esrock and Leichty (1998, 2000) incorporated a more relaxed definition of community service links in their study of Fortune 500 corporate web pages. Esrock and Leichty (2000) accepted Avon’s Breast Cancer Awareness Crusade, among others, as a community service link; however, this 2003 study would not have accepted the Awareness Crusade as a community service link or gateway on a corporate home page. An extremely conservative and strict definition and interpretation of a community support gateway may have accounted for the fairly low count of corporate home pages (58 out of 166) with a true community support gateway.

This study chose only to examine material on corporate web sites with a visible community support gateway on the most appropriate home page. Therefore, corporate web sites with community service embedded deeper within the web site structure were ignored. A true count of community support tools, programs, and material on the entire sample of 166 Fortune 500 corporate web sites may not have been attained. However, the use of a community support gateway allowed for a detailed analysis of corporate web sites that truly target their local, national, and global communities as a key public. In many cases, corporations showcased more than one web site or user interface. Popular retail corporations such as Pepsi or Coca Cola often had web sites for local, national, and international audiences. When two or more corporate web sites or interfaces were available, the coder chose the web site in the corporation’s native language, the site representing the nation in which the corporation resides, or the site best representing the corporation’s services to the public.

Definitions of the corporate industry may have accounted for limitations with this study. In order to have simple industrial divisions, many corporations with contrasting services were grouped in the same category. For example, “technology” as an industry encompassed machinery productions, electrical and computer technologies, and environmental technologies, among others. Additionally, several industries fell within more than one corporate industry category and definition. Many technological industries engaged in the marketing and sales of

their technological products. When a dual industry corporation existed, the industry most visible and recognizable by the general public was used as the primary industry. For example, Whirlpool not only researches and develops new technologies, but also sells its familiar technology products to the public. Therefore, for this content analysis, Whirlpool was assessed as a retail corporation. Perhaps, if industries were broken down into even more specific groups, a more detailed assessment of industries and a statistically significant difference between industry showcasing of community support material would have occurred.

Due to time constraints, this study was conducted and coded by the researcher. Use of a separate coder or use of additional coders to code alongside the researcher would have eliminated researcher bias and provided a more objective content analysis of community support material.

Lack of significant variable presence restricted analysis of data using Chi Square and crosstabs tests. In order for SPSS to accurately detect statistical differences in each category of data, five occurrences of a particular variable must exist in each cell. Many variables such as listserv, chat room, and various “other” and global support programs produced 0 or 1.0% presence on corporate web sites. This provided for invalid or incomplete statistical analysis of some data categories.

Potential for Future Research

This content analysis regarding Fortune 500 corporate web sites and community support creates potential for future research. Pertaining to community support at various levels, future content analyses of Fortune 500 web sites could study whether community support at the global level has indeed increased since this study. As corporations such as Nike and Coca Cola continue to develop multiple interfaces or homepages for various targeted audiences, future content analyses could study how community support differs on multiple web sites by the same corporation. Future studies could also compare presence of community support tools and programs on corporate sites with a community support gateway to corporate sites without a community support gateway. Studies could detect whether non-gateway sites use different one-way and two-way tools and programs to convey community support and counteract the absence of a community support gateway on the homepage. While this was a content analysis, survey or experimental research may also test various stakeholder attitudes and opinions of corporations based on organizational history and web site content.

Conclusion

It appears as if corporate web sites tend to display community support gateways, tools, and programs in order to inform the community rather than engage in mutual trust, feedback, and dialogue. Rank on the Fortune 500 list continues to indicate the level in which an organization will support its community with communication tools and programs. Additionally, corporations tend to focus community support efforts on the local communities in which they reside, rather than dedicate equal amounts of support to global, national, and local communities. Although community support material on corporate home pages accessed through a gateway is currently on the decline, the future holds vast opportunities for corporations to become involved in, and communicate, community support. The Internet possesses textual, visual, and audio capabilities and one-way and two-way communicative functions. The capacity of the Internet and multi-faceted web sites provides unlimited possibilities for corporations to engage in community support. Perhaps as the corporate environment evolves past this era marked by corporate scandal and economic decline, a new era will emerge to feature an upturn in local, national, and global corporate community support utilizing a variety of communication tools.

References

- Adkins, S., Kowalska, N. (1997). Consumers put 'causes' on the shopping list. *M2 PressWire*.
- Altman, B. (1998). Transformed corporate community relations: A management tool for achieving corporate citizenship. *Business and Society Review*, 102, 43-51.
- Badaracco, C. H. (1998). The transparent corporation and organized community. *Public Relations Review*, 24, 265.
- Bendheim, C. L., Waddock, S. A., & Graves, S. B. (1998). Determining best practice in corporate-stakeholder relations using data envelopment analysis: an industry-level study. *Business and Society*, 37, 306-339.
- Bowen, H. R. (1953). *Social responsibilities of the businessman*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Bowman, E. H. & Haire, M. (1976). Social impact disclosure and corporate annual reports. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 11-21.
- Carroll, A. B. (1979). A three-dimensional conceptual model of corporate social performance. *Academy of Management Review*, 4, 497-505.
- Carroll, A. B. (1999). Corporate social responsibility: Evolution of a definitional construct. *Business & Society*, 38, 268-295.

- Cropp, F., & Pincus, J.D. (2001). The mystery of public relations: unraveling its past, unmasking its future. In R. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of public relations*, (pp.189-203). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Daugherty, E. L. (2001). Public relations and social responsibility. *Handbook of public relations* (pp. 385-402). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Donohue, W. A. (1992). *Managing interpersonal conflict*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Elbert, H. & Parket, I.R. (1973). The current status of corporate social responsibility. *Business Horizons*, 16, 5-14.
- Esrock, S., & Leichty, G. (1998). Social responsibility and corporate web pages: Self-presentation or agenda-setting? *Public Relations Review*, 24, 305.
- Esrock, S., & Leichty, G. (1999). Corporate world wide web pages: Serving the news media and other publics. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 76, 456-467.
- Esrock, S., & Leichty, G. (2000). Organization of corporate web pages: Publics and functions. *Public Relations Review*, 26, 327.
- Fomburn, C. J., Gardberg, N. A., & Barnett, M. L. (2000). Opportunity platforms and safety nets: Corporate citizenship and reputational risk. *Business and Society Review*, 105, 85-106.
- Good is gold. (2000). *New Zealand Marketing Magazine*, 19, 4.

- Grunig, J. E., Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Habermas, J. (1983). *The theory of communicative action: Reason and the rationalization of society (Vol. 1)* (T. McCarthy, Trans.). Boston: Beacon Press.
- Hoger, E. A., Capel, J. J., & Myerscough, M. A. (1998). Navigating the web with a typology of corporate users. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 61, 39-48.
- Hutton, J. G. Goodman, M. B., Alexander, J. B., & Genest, C. M. (2001). Reputation management: The new face of corporate public relations? *Public Relations Review*, 27, 247-261.
- Johnson, H. L. (1971). *Business in contemporary society: Framework and issues*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Kent, M., & Taylor, M. (1998). Building dialogic relationships through the world wide web. *Public Relations Review*, 24, 321-334.
- Leichty, G. & Springston, J. (1993). Reconsidering public relations models. *Public Relations Review*, 19, 327-339.
- Liu, C., Arnett, K. P., Capella, L. M., & Beatty, R. C. (1997). Web sites of the fortune 500 companies: Facing customers through home pages. *Information and Management*, 31, 335-345.

- Marsden, C. (2000). The new corporate citizenship of big business: Part of the solution to sustainability? *Business and Society Review*, 105, 9-25.
- McAlister, D., & Ferrell, L. (2002). The role of strategic philanthropy in marketing strategy. *European Journal of Marketing*, 36, 689-705.
- Pava, M., & Krausz, J. (1997). Criteria for evaluating the legitimacy of corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 16, 337-347.
- Perry, M., & Bodkin, C. (2000). Content analysis of fortune 100 company web sites. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 87-96.
- Philanthropy, reputation go hand-in-hand. (2000). *PR Newswire*, 56.
- Pinkston, T., & Carroll, A. (1996). A retrospective examination of CSR orientations: Have they changed? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 15, 199-206.
- Smith, C. (1994). The new corporate philanthropy. *Harvard Business Review*, 105-116.
- Stromer-Galley, J. (2000). On-line interaction and why candidates avoid it. *Journal of Communication*, 50 (4), 111-132.
- Stodder, G. S. (1998). Goodwill hunting. *Entrepreneur*, 26, 118-116.
- Tapscott, D. (2002). How digital era compels corporate good citizenship. *Canadian Speeches*, 15, 26-32.

Trotman, K. T., & Bradley, G. W. (1981). Associations between social responsibility disclosure and characteristics of companies. *Accounting, Organizations, and Society*, 6, 355-362.

Vidaver-Cohen, D., & Altman, B. (2000). Concluding remarks: Corporate citizenship in the new millennium: Foundation for an architecture of excellence. *Business and Society Review*, 105, 145-168.

Wilson, L. (1994). Excellent companies and coalition-building among the Fortune 500: A value and relationship-based theory. *Public Relations Review*, 20, 333-334.

Wood, D (1990). *Business and society*. Harper Collins Publishers.

Tables

Table 1

Percentages of Corporations with a Community Support “Gateway” on Web Site by Rank

<u>Rank</u>	<u>% With “Gateway”</u>
Top Third (n=55)	54.5%
Middle Third (n=55)	29.1%
Bottom Third (n=56)	21.4%

Table 2

Industry Breakdown of Community Support Gateway Presence

<u>Industry</u>	<u>%</u>
Technology (n=55)	16 (29.1%)
Healthcare (n=15)	6 (40.0%)
Retail (n=35)	12 (34.3%)
Banking (n=19)	7 (36.8%)
Communications (n=11)	4 (36.4%)
Energy (n=15)	9 (60.0%)

Note: Several corporations exist as a combination of industries. For example, Whirlpool corporation not only develops new technologies, but also sells its technology products to the public. In cases such as these, the industry most familiar to the public (retail in the case of Whirlpool) was chosen as the primary representative industry for the corporation.

Table 3

Crosstab Percentages of Corporations Using One-Way Communication Tools by Tiered Rank

One-Way Tool	Rank		
	Top Third (n=55)	Middle Third (n=55)	Bottom Third (n=56)
Press Release	21.8%	14.5%	12.7%
Explicit Link***	52.8%	29.1%	21.4%
Mission Statement	25.5%	10.9%	12.5%
News Article	20.0%	9.1%	7.1%
Annual Report	9.1%	7.3%	5.4%
Speech	14.5%	5.5%	8.9%
Advertisement	3.6%	5.5%	1.8%
Other	32.2%	21.8%	14.5%

***Chi Square tests reveal significance at the $p \leq .001$ level.

Table 4

Percentages of Corporations Using Two-Way Communication Tools by Tiered Rank

Two-Way Tool	Rank		
	Top Third (n=55)	Middle Third (n=56)	Bottom Third (n=56)
Chat	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Listserv	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
E-mail	29.1%	20.0%	12.5%
Poll/Survey	7.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%

Table 5

Crosstab Percentages of Corporations Participating in Community Support Human Resources Programs by Tiered Rank

Program/Level	Rank		
	Top Third (n=55)	Middle Third (n=55)	Bottom Third (n=56)
Voluntarism – Global	9.1%	5.2%	1.7%
National***	32.7%	10.9%	5.4%
Local***	41.8%	18.2%	8.9%
Consulting – Global	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%
National	3.6%	1.8%	0.0%
Local	10.9%	5.5%	1.8%
Citizenship – Global	3.6%	3.6%	1.8%
National	9.1%	5.5%	1.8%
Local	18.2%	7.3%	7.1%
Internship – Global	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%
National	9.1%	1.8%	0.0%
Local	9.1%	1.8%	0.0%
Partnership – Global	3.6%	5.5%	0.0%
National	20.0%	10.9%	5.4%
Local*	20.0%	9.1%	5.4%
Other – Global	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%
National	5.2%	1.7%	0.0%
Local	6.9%	1.7%	0.0%

* Chi Square tests reveal significance at the $p \leq .05$ level

***Chi Square tests reveal significance at the $p \leq .001$ level

Table 6

Percentages of Corporations Participating in Community Support Financial Resources Programs by Tiered Rank

Program/Level	Rank		
	Top Third (n=55)	Middle Third (n=55)	Bottom Third (n=56)
Development – Global	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%
National	10.9%	3.6%	0.0%
Local***	23.6%	9.1%	0.0%
Sponsorship – Global	7.3%	0.0%	3.6%
National	20.0%	1.8%	3.6%
Local***	21.8%	1.8%	5.4%
Philanthropy – Global*	20.0%	7.3%	5.4%
National***	45.5%	18.2%	12.5%
Local**	50.9%	25.5%	21.4%
Other – All Levels	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

* Chi Square tests reveal significance at the $p \leq .05$ level

** Chi Square tests reveal significance at the $p \leq .01$ level

***Chi Square tests reveal significance at the $p \leq .001$ level

Table 7

Overall Frequencies of One-way and Two-way Communication Tools Among Websites with a Community Support Gateway (n=58)

<u>Variable</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Gateway	58	100.00%
<u>One-Way Communication Tools</u>		
Link	58	100.00%
Mission Statement	27	46.6%
Press Release	27	46.6%
News Article	20	34.5%
Annual Report	12	20.7%
Speech	16	27.6%
Advertisement	6	10.3%
One-Way Other	39	67.2%
<u>Two-Way Communication Tools</u>		
Chat Room	0	0.0%
Listserv	0	0.0%
E-mail	34	58.6%
Poll	4	6.9%
Two-Way Other	1	1.7%

Table 8

Overall Frequencies of Various Community Support Programs Among Web sites with a Community Support Gateway (n=58)

<u>Human Resources Program</u>	<u>Level</u>		
	<u>Global</u>	<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>
Voluntarism	15.5%	46.6%	65.5%
Consulting	1.7%	5.2%	17.2%
Citizenship	8.6%	15.5%	31.0%
Internship	3.4%	10.3%	10.3%
Partnership	8.6%	34.5%	32.8%
HR Other	1.7%	6.9%	8.6%
<u>Financial Resources Program</u>	<u>Global</u>	<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>
Economic Development	1.7%	13.8%	31.0%
Sponsorship	10.3%	24.1%	27.6%
Philanthropy/Charity	31.0%	72.4%	93.1%
FR Other	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<u>Thought Program</u>	<u>Global</u>	<u>National</u>	<u>Local</u>
Decision Making	1.7%	8.6%	12.1%
Other	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Appendices

Public Relations and Community Support Codebook Criteria and Variable Definitions

Industry of the Corporation:

Technology: Any industry related to, but not limited to scientific study, manufacturing of industrial equipment, engineering, electronics, computers, mining, and construction.

Healthcare : Any industry related to the prevention, treatment, and management of illness and the preservation of mental and physical well being. These include, but are not limited to pharmaceutical companies, drug companies, health care research facilities, hospitals, assisted-living facilities, and human services companies.

Retail: Any industry related to the sale of goods or commodities. Examples include but are not limited to fashion industries, food service industries, equipment sales.

Banking : Any industry in which money is kept for saving or commercial purposes such as investment, savings, loans, or exchange. Industries include but are not limited to, banks, finance institutions, investment institutions, savings institutions, loan institutions, stock institutions, and other financial services.

Communications : Any industry related to the technology employed in transmitting messages. Industries include but are not limited to postal services, radio, television, video, Internet, telephone, satellite, cable, and other media services.

Energy: Any industry related to the creation, distribution, or conservation of energy. Industries include, but are not limited to, electrical energy, gas energy, thermo-nuclear energy, and other energy services.

Insurance: Any industry related to insurance, including health, disaster, life, automobile insurance.

Other: Any industry not related to technology, healthcare, retail, banking, or communications. Please describe in detail on the coding sheet.

Gateway dedicated to “community support” – A community support “gateway,” for this study, constitutes an explicit link or text on a home page used to guide a viewer to a particular location on a corporate web site, such as “community relations.” Possible community support gateway names may include, “public relations,” “community relations,” “corporate citizenship,” or simply “community” Human resources or customer service departments do not apply.

Tools:

One Way Communication Tools:

Explicit link or web page – An explicit link or web page is a page on the corporation’s web site composed of written or visual text dedicated to a specific stakeholder or keyword. It is not a page on a separate web site that was accessed through a link on the corporation’s web site.

Mission or Values Statement – A mission or values statement will be defined as a formal statement describing the mission of the company and the principles, standards, qualities, values, morals, ethics, or services that it deems worthwhile, desirable, important, or necessary.

Press Release – A press release is a formal statement submitted by the corporation to the media. Possible names include “press release,” “news release,” or simply “release.”

News Article – A news article is a formal statement written by the media about the corporation. It may be material previously published in a newspaper, web site, journal, magazine, book, or other forms of media. Possible names may include “news articles,” “news updates,” “recent news,” or simply “news.”

Annual Report – An annual report is a formal report submitted by the corporation to its stockholders. It contains a letter to the shareholders, information on the corporation’s earnings and financial status, information and lists of the corporation’s products and services, and a review of the activities and successes of the past year.

Speech Text or Audio – Speech text will be defined as full-length or abridged written speech text. Speech audio will be defined as full-length or abridged speech material that can be accessed immediately or downloaded onto the computer to hear.

Advertisement – An advertisement is a paid announcement or display on the corporate web site designed to attract public attention.

Other – “Other” will include any form of communication that involves the one-way transmission of a message from the corporation to the public.

Two-Way Communication Tools:

E-mail – An e-mail function on a corporation’s web site appearing as an explicit link or a pop-up screen with an e-mail function that allows a viewer to directly contact the corporation in writing.

Chat Room – A chat room function on a corporation’s web site is any software, explicit page, or pop-up screen providing the community the capability to communicate simultaneously with members of the corporation or members of the public.

Two –Way Listserv – A two-way listserv function on a corporation’s web site will be defined as an enhanced e-mail service where the public can be continuously informed about the corporation through sending e-mails, posting questions and commentary, and submitting responses to e-mails and commentary on the listserv. The stakeholder must sign up to be on the listserv, but does not need to submit e-mails in order to get e-mails from the corporation. Stakeholders can participate by e-mailing the listserv and by responding to messages on the listserv.

Poll/Survey – A survey of the public or of a sample of the public opinion to acquire information. Examples include but are not limited pop-up polls or surveys on the web page, explicit links to a survey or poll on the web page, or a short questionnaire.

Other – “Other” will be described as any form or communication capable of displaying explicit stakeholder or keyword information or material. This may include pop-up advertisements, polls, music, movies, or other interactive or written materials.

Programs:

Program Levels:

Global – The program or initiative is implemented in continents or countries other than the corporation’s “home” country.

National – The program or initiative is implemented with sections of the country in which the corporation resides.

Local – The program or initiative is implemented within the neighborhood, community, district, county, or state in which the corporation resides.

Human Resources:

Voluntarism – A program related to the use of or reliance on voluntary action to maintain an institution or serve the community.

Consulting – A program related to the giving of advice or information to the community.

Citizenship – A program related to the performing of aid and services to the community.

Internships – A program related to the supervised practical training of students or post-graduates within the company.

Partnership – A program that unites two corporations or organizations with the similar goal, mission or need to volunteer time, money, or thought to the community.

Other – Any program besides voluntarism, consulting, citizenship, or internships related to the dedication of an employee’s or group of employees’ time and efforts to the community within or outside of the company.

Financial Resources:

Economic Development – A program related to the financial support of a community’s production of services and goods. The giving of financial aid to businesses throughout the community.

Sponsorship – A program financing a project or an event carried out by another person or group.

Philanthropy/Charity – A program, effort, or inclination to increase the well being of the community by charitable aid or monetary donations.

Other – Any program besides economic development, sponsorship, philanthropy or charity related to the giving of money or financial services to the community.

Thought:

Decision Making – Any program involved in the creation of legislation, public law, or regulation of the community.

Other - Any program besides decision making that is involved in the creation of thought or regulation within the community.

Public Relations and Community Support Coding Sheet

Name of Corporation _____ **Fortune 500 Rank** _____

Industry (Circle One): Technology Healthcare Retail Banking Communications

Energy Insurance Other (Please Describe): _____

<i>Criteria</i>	Record a 1 for existence, or a 0 for non-existence of each variable.
Community relations gateway on home page?	
<i>Tools:</i>	
One-Way Communication Tools:	
Explicit Link	
Mission or Values Statement	
Press Release	
News Article	
Annual Report	
Speech Text or Audio	
Advertisement	
Other	
Two-Way Communication Tools:	
Chat Room	
Two-way Listserv	
E-mail	
Poll/Survey	
Other	
<i>Programs:</i>	Record a 1 for variable existence at all applicable levels.
Human Resources:	Global National Local
Voluntarism	
Consulting	
Citizenship	
Internships	
Partnerships	
Other	
Financial Resources:	Global National Local
Economic Development	
Sponsorship	
Philanthropy/Charity	
Other	
Thought:	Global National Local
Decision Making	
Other	

Katie E. Reynolds

2608 Fillmore Rd. ~ Richmond, VA 23235
(804) 320-7002

EDUCATION

M.A. English, Communications Studies emphasis, expected May 2003
B.A. Double Major Communication Studies (Public Relations) and French
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA 24060
Graduation Date: May 2001 Current GPA 3.7/4.0

Relevant Coursework:

Public Relations Research (graduate)	Public Relations Case Studies
Communications Research (graduate)	Principles of Public Relations
Writing and Design for the Web (graduate)	Advanced Media Writing
Professional Writing (graduate)	Organizational Communication

EXPERIENCE

Intern, VA Tech Residential and Dining Programs, Summer 2001

Marketing and Public Relations, 43 Owens Hall, Blacksburg, VA 24060

- Produced Informative articles, posters, flyers, and press releases
- Helped write and design special events advertisements
- Gained public relations experience as the Residential and Dining Programs representative at Summer 2001 New Student Orientation

Intern, Siddall, Matus & Coughter, Inc., Summer 2000

830 East Main Street, 24th Floor, Richmond, VA 23219

- Prepared media kits, conducted research, and reported new business for Account Service
- Gained public relations and advertising experience with JhoonRhee.com, Discovery Health Channel, The Mills, Pocahontas Parkway, and Interstate 95 Bridge Restoration accounts

Volunteer, New River Valley Early Intervention Council, Fall 2000

Senior Public Relations Case Studies Project

- Conducted interviews with members of the healthcare community
- Developed a full public relations campaign to raise awareness of the NRVEIC
- Designed brochures, advertisements, posters, press releases, and media kits to inform the community of the NRVEIC and its services

General Computer Experience:

- SPSS, Adobe Pagemaker, Microsoft Suite, Dreamweaver, BBEdit

Extracurricular Experience:

- Public Relations Student Society of America, 1999-2001
- Virginia Tech Hokie Ambassadors (University Tourguide) 2000-20
- Circle K Service Organization 1999-2002 - Secretary, 2001-2002

HONORS

- Virginia Tech Communications Department Public Speaking Graduate Teaching Assistantship and tuition waiver
- Omicron Delta Kappa National Leadership Honor Society
- President, Communications Studies Graduate Student Association