



PR 2020: THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

**Scenario Planning with members of the
Chartered Institute of Public Relations**

**A report on a series of scenario planning meetings with
the United Kingdom's
Chartered Institute of Public Relations
Regional and Special Interest groups
July to October 2011**

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Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

As a first project of the recently-formed Chartered Institute of Public Relations Research and Development Unit, scenario planning meetings were held with the Institute's regional and special interest groups from July to the end of October 2011. The meeting focused on possible futures for public relations practice in the UK going forward to 2020. The results of the meetings are intended to inform the work of the Unit, and policy development within the Institute.

Fifteen meetings were held during the four month period, with regional groups and representatives of special interest groups, in locations in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England. Three meetings, two with Greater London group members and one with special interest group members, were held in London.

106 took part in the 15 meetings, allowing for full group discussion and discussion in two smaller groups in each meeting. Each meeting looked at possible futures for public relations practice in the UK, using scenario planning as a basis for the groups' work. Looking ahead to 2020, most likely, best case and worst case scenarios were developed and used to make recommendations for action for the Institute and the practice in general.

By 2020, a successful practice will be clear on what public relations is, and the benefits it can deliver. It will be strongly led, respected, and established as a senior management discipline. Practitioners will be confident, committed to professional development and working to well-developed codes of conduct. The Chartered Institute of Public Relations will provide strong leadership to the practice, and there will be recognized and credible role models speaking out for the practice.

Scenarios explored the likelihood of reaching success by 2020, through examination of most likely developments (the most likely scenarios). Best and worst case scenarios were also generated by each group.

With very few exceptions, the most likely scenarios were unacceptable to the groups, involving little real change from the present state of the practice. The best case scenarios raise the opportunities open to the practice, and the worst case scenarios point out some of the dangers.

Recommendations for action emerging from examination of the scenarios include:

1. Encouragement to the Institute to provide leadership and meet expectations for its leadership
2. Education and training for public relations practice need to be taken to higher levels, which will involve greater collaboration with education for public relations
3. Practitioners need greater confidence in what they do, and should lead practice development by example
4. There is a need for clearer thinking and guidance on measurement and evaluation
5. Codes of conduct should be strengthened

6. Practitioners need to move faster to develop their knowledge of digital communication
7. There is a need for better definitions of public relations and what it is to achieve
8. Change should be embraced
9. Industry bodies should commit to research and development
10. There is a need to synchronize experience and fresh talent, and to celebrate young people in practice

Other recommendations are set out in the report.

The report which follows summarizes discussion at the meetings and conclusions reached. Appendices set out the contents of the discussions as well as giving details of the scenario planning approach used. The PR2020 exercise was intended to spark debate among practitioners and others interested in the future of public relations, as well as provide practical guidance to planning for research and the Institute itself. In the interests of continuing discussion, all the material gathered is offered in this report to allow for this.

Introduction

***“Are we fearful of the best case scenario?
Working towards the best case scenario means becoming
transparent, accountable and better at what we do.”
CIPR Midlands group, 1 August 2011
(page 44)***

The Chartered Institute of Public Relations is committed under its charter to research and development to take the practice of public relations forward. In early 2011, the Institute established a Research and Development Unit to act on this charter commitment.

This report summarizes the Unit's first project: to find out, using scenario planning, how CIPR members see the future of the practice in the UK and the role that research and development might play in the future of the practice. Findings from the project will be used:

- to inform the work of the Unit, and
- to help the Institute plan for practice development and its own role in practice development

The project involved meetings with CIPR members from national and regional groups, and with representatives of special interest groups. These took place between July and the end of October 2011.

Fifteen meetings were held throughout the UK, starting in Bournemouth on 18 July 2011 and ending in Belfast on 24 October 2011. A full list of locations, meetings and numbers of participants is set out in Appendix I (page 18).

Scenario planning allows for disciplined discussion of possible futures – the development of scenarios which can be used to guide decision-making and planning. The approach used in the series of CIPR meetings generates good discussion and insights, and some of these are captured in this report. A note and references on the scenario planning approach are set out in Appendix II (page 21).

The approach invites discussion on a number of variables or factors to be found in a desired future. A small number of these are examined from the perspective of the present, and into the future – how are they likely to develop, what might the best developments on each variable be, and what would be the worst. The judgments made are combined into word-pictures or scenarios, which can be used as aids to decision-making, in risk assessment and in planning.

Discussion at each meeting moved through four phases:

- In 2020 and from the point of view of a group of CIPR members, what would a successful and thriving public relations practice involve? What factors or variables would be at work?
- In two smaller groups, three variables were chosen for examination, against the period from now until 2020. What, for each variable, would be likely to happen? What, against success for the practice, would be the best development? And, against success, what would be the worst development?
- Combining judgments made on each of the variables produced 'most likely', 'best case' and 'worst case' scenarios. These were then examined to draw out recommendations for action
- Recommendations and underlying scenarios were discussed briefly by all participants in the meeting and conclusions drawn.

After each meeting, flip-chart notes made during each phase of the discussion were used to write reports on each meeting. These reports, set out in full in Appendix III (page 23), have been analyzed and summarized for the next section.

Findings

106 took part in 15 regional and special interest group meetings.

The largest group involved 12 CIPR Midland group members in Birmingham, and the smallest groups four members (CIPR Greater London (second group) and CIPR North West in Manchester).

Of the total, 30 (28%) were male and 76 (72%) were female; 51 (48%) worked in consultancies, the remainder in the public sector (27 or 25%), membership organizations (9 or 8.5%), the private sector other than consultancies (8 or 7.5%), and non-profit organizations (4 or 4%). Seven (7%) were students or academics.

Asked to identify the factors or variables at work in a successful, thriving public relations practice in 2020, groups identified the factors or variables set out in separate reports in Appendix III (page 23) and consolidated in a master list in Appendix IV (page 58).

The master list in Appendix IV was analyzed into themes, and ranked according to the number of items relating to each theme. For public relations to be successful, and for the practice to thrive in 2020:

1. There will be a general understanding of what public relations is, and is to achieve
2. Skillful practitioners – it will be a practice populated by highly skilled practitioners
3. Strength of the practice – it will be strongly led, and confident of the contribution it can make
4. Practice at the cutting edge: creativity and innovation – it will lead on innovation
5. Profitable, viable business activities – it will be a profitable business activity
6. Measurement and evaluation: the benefits of practice – measurement questions will have been addressed and clear measures of the benefits of the practice will be established
7. Respect – it will be a respected practice
8. Relationship to senior management – its place in senior management will be assured
9. Separate existence or better integrated with other areas of marketing – an area of controversy: should public relations be a separate discipline or have established itself as a leading element in the marketing mix?
10. Diversity – as a practice it will reflect the diversity of the wider society
11. Employment and career opportunities – it will provide employment opportunities and a clear career path
12. Standards of practice – clear standards will have been set for the practice
13. There will be closer collaboration with other areas of management, such as human resources
14. Positive role models for the practice – there is a need to find role models to represent the practice

15. A healthy, successful media sector – it is in the interests of good public relations practice that the practice works against the background of a healthy media sector
16. Relevance – by 2020 public relations will still remain relevant

Smaller groups within each meeting chose three of the variables identified to develop scenarios. Topics chosen by groups for consideration in scenario development are set out in Appendices III in regional and special interest group reports and again in Appendix V (page 61) for summary in a master list at the end of this appendix. Scenarios generated are separated out into most likely, best case and worst case scenarios in Appendix VI (page 67).

A reading of the scenarios in Appendix VI suggests that some of the most likely developments identified by the groups will be that, by 2020:

- Numbers of practitioners will increase, forcing development of standards. There will be movement towards more professional practice
- There will still be questions about the direction of practice, partly because the practice will remain ill-defined. There will be a blurring of boundaries in practice. The practice will remain fuzzy, perceived as an element in marketing.
- The practice will continue as now, misunderstood and not respected as a practice. It may remain static, taking no risks and opting for safety.
- Greater, but 'safe,' diversity in the practice should be possible
- Reputation of the practice will remain much the same
- Little progress will be made towards better measures of the practice (although some believed that by 2020 the practice will have developed better evaluation tools)
- Special efforts will have to be made to incorporate digital and social media, but by 2020 competence in use of these will be up across the board and there will be more competition with others using the same media to reach audiences. The practice will be driven by technology and will not be reacting fast enough.
- Practice will need to take account of changes in the media landscape
- There will be more recognition of importance of the practice at senior management levels
- The practice will have to work harder to maintain budgets, be more creative to do more with less. The economy will remain stagnant.

With a few exceptions (CIPR Scotland in Edinburgh, for example), the most likely scenarios were felt to be unacceptable. To allow developments to continue to their likely outcomes in 2020 would be unsatisfactory, against aspirations for progress.

The best case scenarios show good prospects for the practice. By 2020, the best case scenarios set out in Appendix VI see:

- General understanding, acceptance and confidence of public relations improving, and the best people of all backgrounds rising to the top of a practice seen as clean, ethical and honest
- Robust, reliable and simple measurement approaches will be in place, easily understood and correlated with objectives and business plans
- Movement on from preoccupations with measurement, to management of expectations of the practice
- The practice pioneering the use of new tools – CIPR will lead the agenda in making use of new tools and developers of new technologies will consult the CIPR at research and development phases
- Practitioners buying in to the idea of developing their skills and taking the initiative to do this, recognizing the value of continuing professional development and sharing of best practice. A clear pathway will be mapped out for progression from entry to the highest levels of practice
- Recognition of a majority of practitioners by strong professional bodies
- A larger CIPR committed to continuing professional development and to codes of conduct
- Public relations leading the way in changes and developments in social communication
- The practice synchronizing fresh talent with experience
- The practice commanding professional levels of pay, realistic budgets and able to show financial value of work
- Clients buying strategy not tactics
- An end to recession and a thriving private sector in which the value of public relations will be realized. In the public sector, the practice will be seen as more relevant.

Worst case scenarios see:

- Public relations permanently equated with spin and its reputation diminishing further. The practice fails to raise and keep up with expectations
- Continuation of stereotypes: practitioners are essentially operatives, female practitioners are managed, male practitioners manage, and the practice in the process of being downgraded. It is white, mono-cultural and ageist, and dominated by the use of writing skills
- Standards decline as larger numbers enter the practice with poorly developed skills
- Professional bodies failing to take initiatives to put in place necessary regimes for all to sign up to, to ensure skill levels. There may a lack of incentives for training, too many 'scrappy' courses and lack of resolve on standards
- Competition between professional bodies damaging the practice
- Public relations lagging behind developments in technology, communication and the wider society and seen as irrelevant in a fast-paced society
- 'Public relations' ceasing to be of use as a term to describe the practice
- Measurement standards remaining the same, but looking worse as best practice elsewhere improves

- Economic recession

Scenario planning looks at what could happen, on the basis of current knowledge, available information, projections. Most likely, best and worst case scenarios become guides to decision-makers, for planning and recommendations for action.

Groups taking part in the PR2020 series of meetings used the scenarios to draw out specific recommendations for action. These are set out in Appendix VII (page 87) and summarized as:

CIPR encouraged and expected to provide leadership

1. The CIPR should provide guidance to organizations looking to employ public relations staff; the CIPR should be seen as the leading body for public relations practitioners and as an authoritative body; the CIPR should set minimum training/skills required for members; CIPR members/chartered practitioners should be seen as the leading professionals in the UK; membership and training should be affordable; for the CIPR, there should be more engagement with members on a face-to-face basis, rather than through email; the CIPR should raise its own profile; there is a need to address the question of why the CIPR has such a small percentage of the large group of practitioners known to be working in the UK in membership; the CIPR should develop as the voice of the profession (and should have the best public relations in the country); there is a need to examine who speaks for the profession (parallel with the CBI – is there a need for a CEO, or an independent, salaried president, in office for a longer term (3 years?) and able to become the face of the profession?); on a matter like hacking, what did the CIPR have to say on the fundamental issues involved?; the CIPR should also comment on bad public relations – public relations can come to be associated with incompetence; the CIPR should lead on new developments and innovation (looking back, we haven't done enough); the CIPR should promote practitioner qualifications to HR and employers (in health care, for example, people have to be chartered/qualified. By 2020, greater progress should have been made on chartered status for practitioners); we need to work towards a single, strong, respected professional body covering all aspects of communication: a range of professional qualifications, sharing experience, knowledge and best practice, developing defined career progression routes, with all practitioners committed to CPD, qualifications and codes of conduct; there should be a vote on international licensing of the profession; fifty per cent of practitioners should belong to a professional body; for CIPR, there needs to be a meaningful, stratified membership with transparency of appointment at each level of membership; there needs to be enforced discipline; there is a need to make chartered status mean more; every CIPR member should lobby their companies to enforce professional standards; Heads and chairs of CIPR should lobby government about the importance of public relations practice; CIPR should be more prepared to police standards; there's a need to repackage payment for membership – according to income; there should also be more flexible arrangements for payment of membership fees, and differing rates for membership according to sectors; CIPR should recognize and act on gender pay imbalance, and get its own house in order;

there is a need for a drive to retain members aged 25 – 34, and to recruit more student members; we need to lobby against red tape/unnecessary legislation; CIPR could lead raising standards across the industry – anyone practicing public relations should/must be a CIPR member; costs of membership should be reviewed.

Improvements to education and training

2. The scenarios suggest the need for improvements to education and training; public relations professionals should see training as a must – the CIPR should provide relevant training; there is a need for arrangement for constant re-education; much greater recognition needs to be given to CPD – what percentage of CIPR members are doing this?; it would be useful to have an effective mentoring system in place; there should be increased emphasis on qualifications and training, and increased use of and recognition for CPD; there is a need for better and continuous professional education, for recognized qualifications, regular assessments of both practice and theory, and a stronger code of conduct; in the interests of developing good practitioners, a mentoring process should be formalized, and the significance and value of mentors recognized; organizations will need to invest in their people; practitioners and organizations should share knowledge and best practice, through job swaps and networking; organizations should be able to expect loyalty from individuals provided with training; there is need for public relations apprenticeships; chartered practitioner status should be seen as the gold standard; elevate training – give it a strategic element, and put in place CPD for senior people in the profession; there is a need to invest in professional education; the code of practice should be promoted; CPD should be compulsory; there should be more awareness and circulation of case studies, illustrating best practice, innovations in the industry; time to read should be built into the daily routine, training and personal development plans.

Practitioners to develop confidence, lead by example

3. Public relations practitioners must act as professionals, keep on top of developments and collectively do better in their work, improving their use of the tools available to them; practitioners should represent – do their own public relations for -- the practice; those involved in the practice need to lead by example and leverage role models; efforts to improve public relations must be collective, not individual; the ‘old chestnut’ – public relations needs to do public relations for public relations. We must become capable to demonstrating value, professional values, and the value of the contribution we make to democratic society; efforts to improve public relations must be collective, not individual; practitioners need to have pride in what they do – will this happen?; practitioners need greater self confidence (from access to the board, and also from changes in the way they see themselves); there should be stronger representation/profile building [of public relations practice] to students, employers and training bodies; externally, there is a need for effective public relations for public relations, measured through perception surveys; there’s a need to recruit business savvy people who know public relations and the importance of communication in business; senior

practitioners should be addressing business audiences, such as the CBI, Institute of Directors; there's a need to recruit graduates who take public relations and its scope seriously – public relations could be approached through articles, for graduates with general degrees (firsts, 'thinkers'); reputation is most worrying – the practice needs credibility, membership, accreditation (the 'Corgi' argument: homeowners look to plumbers who are 'Corgi' registered to install household boilers safely and reliably. Corgi registration is an assurance of quality. Only practitioners who are accredited should be able to provide advice and service to ensure quality of work); what about 'over-qualified' practitioners – where are the roles for them; public relations for public relations should be improved.

Need clear thinking and guidance on evaluation

4. There remains a strong need to improve approaches to evaluation, to demonstrate the value that public relation delivers; the purpose of evaluation should be questioned to make it more meaningful; the continuing importance of evaluation must be recognized; practice would benefit from greater use of evidence, and scenarios; we need global, industry standards and guidelines on recognized evaluation (including guidance on how to value keeping stories out of the media). These would allow us to show how cost effective public relations is, but we will need to go further to show the corporate value of the practice, to get a seat on the board and demonstrate that public relations is business critical; need to develop an integrated and meaningful toolkit to measure impact and value of communications against business objectives, to be used as a standard by all practitioners and their employers; we need to quantify profession's contribution to GDP and economy; reputation should be identified as balance sheet asset (separated out from goodwill); measurement training should become a core part of CIPR/PRCA/University training; there should be one agreed measurement score for the industry, focused more on outcomes; there remains a need to develop and implement an industry standard for evaluation, to be adapted to different scenarios/challenges/objectives. It should emerge from consultation with business leaders; public relations evaluation should be built into business auditing activities; the industry should work with monitoring and evaluation agencies to develop standards for evaluation; measurement should be a driver of improvement and success; we need to set measurable objectives (more numeracy); there is a need to invest in measurement; there should be more and better tool-kits, and greater awareness of those available; the CIPR should commission/develop new ways of measuring impact, and should take responsibility for getting key industry players together to inform and shape these; we need to clarify measurement and evaluation to demonstrate real value.

Codes of conduct need strengthening

5. There is a need for stronger codes (of conduct and of ethics) and understanding of these; lack of self regulation may need to regulation; there is a need to strengthen codes, revisit ethical questions; the practice needs to be

clean, honest and ethical, and chartered status very important; there should be one global ethical code.

Practitioners need to develop knowledge and ownership of digital communications

6. Practitioners need to develop knowledge and ownership of digital communications; new tools need to be assessed against media requirements and the coverage they offer; social media guidelines will require frequent updating; social media training should become a core part of CIPR/PRCA/University training; the public relations industry should end the debate on ownership of social media and move on to strategy regarding their use.

Need for better definition of what public relations is, and is to achieve

7. There remains a need for better definition of what public relations as a practice is meant to achieve – what is public relations and what is it to do?; public relations should be more proactive, rather than be forced into situations; there is a need to re-evaluate definitions of the practice, roles and codes of conduct; public relations has to be shown to be intrinsic throughout the organization, establishing a culture of communication and customer care at all levels. This requires a cultural change, to be led by us (communicators); there must be buy-in from the top down, which means taking part in a conversation about where the organization is going; priorities and focus must be set from above to allow public relations and communications to be more strategic; development of public relations tactics should be creative and cost-effective -- no gloss, no gimmicks – just results that affect reputation; public relations is not a communication practice, but one that makes use of communication – do we need to rebrand the practice?; ‘public relations’ as a term should be scrapped, to provide a clean slate for communicators, lose the historic stigma, help foster respect, and open new business opportunities; we need to develop a clear articulation of the definition of public relations and reputation management and get consensus on this from a broad spectrum of the profession; boards should have public relations professionals; public relations needs to stop questioning itself and debating its own position – it is itself and clear about what it is, but it also needs to re-invent itself, promote itself and educate as to what it involves; public relations needs to claim its place in marketing communications – “occupy the land;” public relations is content creation – not at all media relations, it is brand and reputation building; there is a need to re-examine and clarify the term public relations; there are needs for understanding of public relations, public relations for public relations, and new ways to communicate the value of public relations; it must be recognized that public relations goes beyond media relations – it is strategic, part of objective setting right at the outset in decision-making and planning; public relations is more than the application of journalistic skills.

Public relations practice has to understand and embrace change

8. To stay on the cutting edge, there need to be ways of sharing best practice and the practice needs to embrace a new generation of talent; public relations practice has to understand and embrace change – we must continue to learn, through constant re-education; how will public relations stay on top of developments – how will the CIPR, consultancy management, encourage the discipline to stay current?; how will public relations deal with convergence – of communications, advertising and marketing agencies – and maintain share of resources allocated to advertising and public relations?; public relations should not be scared of innovation – should take control of this and experiment; it is up to us, as practitioners, to educate clients and others.

Industry bodies need to commit to research and development

9. Industry bodies need to commit to research and development, carrying out research into new methods. These efforts should be headed by industry leaders; there should research and investment in the development of new technology, in-house expertise (we know the tools, but can we invent them?); There should be collaboration with the IT industry to tap into skills and innovations that allow us to lead in the area of social media.

Need for more collaboration with education

10. There is a need for more collaboration with further and higher education; there need to be better links between practice and the academic study of public relations.

Synchronize experience and fresh talent

11. We need to synchronize experience and fresh talent; we should celebrate young people in practice.

Improve practice in government

12. In government, there is a need to work for a clearer separation of political communication and government information work, since confusion of the two has had a negative impact on public relations.

New approaches to relations with the media

13. Improvements are necessary in discussions with the media; there is a need for a greater public understanding of how the media and public relations work together, through media studies education; public relations should help journalists to keep the media industry thriving; the relationship between advertising and public relations should be improved to gain editorial coverage.

Appreciate and respond to national differences

14. Scotland should not be ignored, as a country
15. Practice will evolve differently in Wales – there is an emphasis on ethics in practice and training. The Welsh Assembly is subject to public scrutiny, and the Welsh media are enfeebled. There is a growth in popular action, directed at a more accessible assembly. The Welsh language and culture are sources of action. Wales is a 'network of networks' with active voluntary organizations and participation in these. New media are fostering links among the networks. In-house practitioners don't see themselves as 'public relations practitioners,' taking other titles. There are few HQs in Wales, and less separate spend on public relations.

Closer work with human resources

16. There is a need for closer work with human resources on job roles and requirements.

Follow up planning exercises

17. There must be follow-ups to exercises like this!

Conclusions and Recommendations

The PR2020 look to the future of public relations enabled members and others associated with the Chartered Institute of Public Relations to examine possible future developments for the practice in the United Kingdom.

Discussion held in fifteen meetings throughout the UK and in the CIPR's London office enabled participants to set out the views of possible futures for the practice.

Most likely developments, if current trends and practices continue, will not meet the aspirations of those now working in the practice, at least as far as the expressions of views summarized in this report allow this conclusion.

There are many opportunities to do much better than simply wait for the most likely scenarios to come to pass. Doing better suggests strong roles for the professional bodies concerned with the future of the practice. Specific recommendations coming out of the discussions suggest what their roles might be and what they might involve in terms of specific actions.

There's also a need for practitioners themselves to recognize the part they will need to play in bringing about the sort of future for the practice that they can aspire to – there are needs to counter traditions and stereotypes in the practice, to work against satisfaction with the status quo, and to embrace the essential requirements for continuing professional development.

All the material from the PR2020 discussions is set out in the report to allow others to read it and draw their conclusions. In some ways, the material is familiar. It returns to themes that have already been discussed at length. And the views are – in the nature of the exercise of looking at desired futures – aspirational. However, addressing the issues raised is now given added urgency by developments in the practice, by technology forcing the pace of development, and by the expectations that more and better qualified entrants to the practice are bringing to it. It is time to address some longstanding issues, and this report contains recommendations to act on these.

Recommendations from the discussion set out in the last section of the report could be further summarized:

1. The Chartered Institute of Public Relations is encouraged and expected to provide leadership
2. Education and training for public relations practice need to be taken to higher levels, which will involve greater collaboration with education for public relations
3. Practitioners need greater confidence in what they do, and should lead practice development by example
4. There is a need for clearer thinking and guidance on measurement and evaluation
5. Codes of conduct should be strengthened
6. Practitioners need to move faster to develop their knowledge of digital communication

7. There is a need for better definitions of public relations and what it is to achieve
8. Change is to be understood and embraced
9. Industry bodies should commit to research and development
10. There is a need to synchronize experience and fresh talent, and to celebrate young people in practice
11. Practice in government should be improved through clearer separation of political communication and government information work
12. There is a need for new approaches to media relations
13. National and regional differences in the UK should be recognized -- Scotland should not be overlooked as a country, and developments in Wales are affecting approaches to practice there
14. Closer collaboration with human resource management is needed
15. There should be follow up exercises like the PR2020 discussions

This again is a familiar list, but action is now needed on the recommendations contained within it. One example – the need for clearer thinking and guidance on measurement and evaluation -- measurement and evaluation in public relations have been thought through, and are the subjects of current discussion in the Association for Measurement and Evaluation in Communication, with the collaboration of other bodies, such as CIPR. Participants in the PR2020 meetings said that would help to have full knowledge of available tool kits for evaluation and of current resources available on measurement and evaluation. At the moment, there is insufficient knowledge of the work that has been done on measurement and evaluation, and better use needs to be made of this.

The Research and Development Unit will work with the Institute to take the findings of this study on, and to help in the implementation of some of the recommendations that bear on innovation, in research, measurement and evaluation, and the integration of technological developments into practice.

We look forward to reactions to the report and to taking the discussion on into action.

APPENDIX I

Meetings and Participants

CIPR Wessex, Bournemouth
18 July 2011, 4pm – 7pm, Bournemouth
Number of participants, seven (full list available).
Male 5, female 2.
Public Sector (University): 3
Consultancy: 4

CIPR Scotland, Aberdeen
21 July 2011, 2pm to 5pm, Aberdeen.
Number of participants, nine (full list available).
Male, 1, female 8.
Private Sector: 1
Public Sector: 2
Membership Organisation: 1
Consultancy: 4
Student: 1

CIPR Scotland, Glasgow
22 July 2011, 9am to 12 noon, Glasgow.
Number of participants, five (full list available).
Male, 1, female 4.
Public Sector: 2
Membership Organisation: 2
Consultancy: 1

CIPR Scotland, Edinburgh
22 July 2011, 3pm to 6pm, Edinburgh.
Number of participants, eight (full list available).
Male, 1, female 7.
Private Sector: 1
Public Sector: 6
Consultancy: 1

CIPR Cymru, Cardiff
27 July 2011, 4pm to 7pm, Cardiff.
Number of participants, ten (full list available).
Male, 3, female 7.
Public Sector: 1
Consultancy: 7
Students: 2

CIPR East Anglia, Norwich
1 August 2011, 10am to 1pm, Norwich
Number of participants, ten (full list available).
Male, 3, female 7.
Public Sector: 3
Non-profit: 1
Consultancy: 6

CIPR Special Interest Groups, London
4 August 2011, 5pm to 8pm, London
Number of participants, six (full list available).
Male, 2, female 4.
Private Sector: 1
Consultancy: 1
Membership Organization: 4
Groups represented:
Education/Skills
Corporate and Financial
Science, Engineering, Technology and Maths
Public Affairs
CIPR (2)

CIPR Greater London group, London
11 August 2011, 5pm to 8pm, London
Number of participants, nine (full list available).
Male, 3, female 6.
Private Sector: 2
Consultancy: 5
Membership Organization: 1
Academic: 1

CIPR Midlands group, Birmingham
15 August 2011, 4pm to 7pm, Birmingham
Number of participants, twelve (full list available).
Male, 1, female 11.
Private Sector: 1
Public Sector: 2
Consultancy: 9

CIPR Greater London (second group)
19 September 2011, 5pm to 8pm, London
Number of participants, four (full list available).
Male, 4
Private Sector: 1
Consultancy: 2
Member Organisation: 1

CIPR West of England, Bristol
20 September 2011, 5pm to 8pm, Bristol
Number of participants, five (full list available).
Male, 2, female 3.
Public Sector: 3
Consultancy: 2

CIPR North West, Manchester
26 September 2011, 10am to 1pm, Manchester
Number of participants, four (full list available).
Female 4.
Private Sector: 1
Consultancy: 3

CIPR Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, Sheffield
26 September 2011, 5pm to 8pm, Sheffield
Number of participants, seven (full list available).
Male, 3, female 4.
Public Sector (University): 2
Public Sector: 1
Non-profit: 1
Consultancy: 1
Students: 2

CIPR North East, Newcastle
27 September 2011, 10am to 1pm, Newcastle
Number of participants, five (full list available).
Female 5.
Public Sector: 1
Consultancy: 4

CIPR Northern Ireland, Belfast
24 October 2011, 10.30am to 1pm, Belfast
Number of participants, five (full list available).
Male 1, female 4
Public Sector: 1
Non-profit: 2
Consultancy: 1
Student: 1

Totals:

Participants: 106

Male: 30

Female: 76

Private Sector: 8
Public Sector: 27
Consultancy: 51
Membership Organizations: 9
Non-profit: 4
Academics and
Students: 7

APPENDIX II

Scenario Planning

Scenario planning is a powerful technique for looking into the future, originating in the work of think tanks such as the Hudson Institute, and adopted with great effect by companies such as Shell.

Scenarios are used to:

- help make decisions in the present
- to plan
- to see and capitalise on opportunities and
- to avoid possible difficulties in the future

Scenarios are “plausible pictures of the future,” developed through the use of informed and disciplined intuition. Discipline is imposed on intuition by restricting speculations about the future to a small number of variables important in future developments.

The scenario planning exercise begins by asking what would might success look like at some point in the future – for the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, what would a successful, thriving public relations practice in 2020 involve? What factors or variables would be at work in the success of the practice?

Scenario planning involves developing a list of significant variables and then choosing a small number – three or four – for consideration. By keeping the number of variables small, the look into the future is disciplined and manageable. From a list of, say, ten variables that might be significant, the three or four considered most important can be chosen (the exercise can be carried out again with other combinations of variables until no new insights are gained).

For the first three or four variables, each is considered separately. How might they develop into the future? Which developments would be best for the organisation, which most likely, and which worst in terms of their impact? When all three variables have been considered, they can be considered together, and ‘most likely’, ‘best case’ and ‘worst case’ scenarios emerge.

Each scenario can then be examined: against success, is the most likely acceptable? Can steps be taken to get closer to the best case? How – precisely – can the worst case be avoided? The scenarios can be used in this way to inform current decision-making, and to give pointers to necessary action.

Facilitation of a scenario planning exercise

The approach to scenario planning described is a simplified approach that allows for small group discussion to develop scenarios. It works best when participants in the discussion have a strong personal stake and interest in it and have special knowledge of value in the discussion, which can be informed by knowledge of trends, relevant research, and projections.

After a general introduction along the lines of the description above, a larger group can be broken into smaller working groups. These can add to the list of variables given in the introduction, with discussion being led by the facilitator who can also help the group to identify one of the group to act as a presenter of the group’s discussion when the results are presented back to the larger group.

Allow 10 minutes (times are approximate – may be shorter or slightly longer) for the whole group to settle on the larger list, before asking them to work in smaller groups and choose the three variables that they wish to work on first (what they consider to be the most important or interesting variables having an impact on the question facing the group). This should take another 5 minutes.

Once the variables have been chosen, each should be considered in turn. How are they likely to develop ('most likely'), what would be the best development, and what would be the worst (in terms of impact)?

Discipline has to be imposed here, to keep the group discussion focussed only on the variable involved (interaction between variables is discussed later).

Discussing each variable through to 'most likely', 'best' and 'worst' developments should take about 40 minutes.

At the end of this phase of the discussion, the group should look at the variables together, to arrive at scenarios – 'word pictures' -- which show the interaction of all three variables together, and allow the group to decide on actions to be taken in response to the most likely scenario, the 'best case' scenario and the 'worst case' scenario. This phase should take a further 20 minutes.

A final 5 minutes can be taken to prepare for the presentation of the group's discussion back to the larger group, where the larger group will hear from each of the groups, before a more general discussion takes place on the implications of the scenarios that have been generated.

Total time for group work is 60 - 80 minutes.

Results

The results of discussion of the scenarios lead on to plans and decisions relating to specific actions that can help:

- Monitor progress towards realisation of the most likely scenario, if this is desirable
- Establish specific steps to be taken to realise the best case scenario, or get closer to it, and to avoid the worst case scenario

The results of the discussion are, in the end, very practical, and lead to clear pointers to action.

Scenario Planning References

The Art of the Long View: Scenario Planning – Protecting your Company against an Uncertain World, Peter Schwartz, Doubleday 1991

The Authentic Enterprise. Arthur Page Society, 2007

<http://www.awpagesociety.com/images/uploads/2007AuthenticEnterprise.pdf>

Innovation and the Future of Public Relations Practice: Beyond Integrated Marketing Communication, based on a presentation to the Swiss Public Relations Institute, Jon White, 1999 (copy available from Jon White)

Business Planning for Turbulent Times: New Methods for Applying Scenarios
Edited by Rafael Ramirez, John W Selsky and Kees van der Heijden, Earthscan 2010

Reputation Management: Leading Practitioners Look to the Future of Public Relations, Kevin Murray and Jon White, Chime Communications, 2006, www.bell-pottinger.co.uk (go Publications, Reputation Management)

APPENDIX III

Reports of Regional and Special Interest Group Meetings

CIPR Wessex

18 July 2011, 4pm – 7pm, Bournemouth

For the group in Bournemouth, a successful future for public relations practice to 2020 would involve:

- A practice that is respected
- A practice led by a strong professional body
- A separate existence for public relations, in which the practice is not subsumed under some other practice
- One in which the practice is valued
- A practice that is accessible to most
- Positive role models for the practice
- Tangible results
- A practice accepted like others, such as accounting
- Full employment and career opportunities
- A practice that is a real career choice, not one that people fall into
- A professional research culture
- Clearer understanding of evaluation
- Diversity, a move away from London-centric approaches towards more globalised approaches to the practice
- A practice able to point to its beneficial results
- Use of technology
- Transparency
- A practice that incorporates practitioners now working under other labels, such as activists
- A general understanding of what public relations is, and is to achieve
- A practice from which more CEOs could come

Two smaller groups developed scenarios using three variables chosen from this longer list:

Group 1 examined:

- Diversity, a move away from London-centric approaches towards more globalised approaches to the practice
- A practice accepted like others, such as accounting, (combining this with a practice that is respected)
- A practice that is accessible to most

Group 2 examined:

- Tangible results
- A practice that is respected
- Diversity, a move away from London-centric approaches towards more globalised approaches to the practice

Groups produced the following scenarios:

Group 1:

Most likely scenario

Between now and 2020, there will be significant growth in numbers of practitioners with modest progress on questions of diversity, against a background of an increase in communication practice. The increasing role of digital information will create barriers for some. There will remain confusion

about the direction of practice, based on unclear definitions of what public relations practice is and is to achieve, as citizen control over communications increases.

Best case scenario

The years to 2020 will see general understanding and acceptance of public relations develop, and the best people from all backgrounds will rise to the top of the practice. Public relations will support democracy by empowering people to communicate freely and transparently. Technical barriers to communication will be swept away.

Worst case scenario

Public relations' licence to operate will be demolished by regulation of communication and employment, leading to a collapse in employment, growth and resources. Public relations will be permanently equated with spin. Social media business models will collapse and 'Murdoch will live forever.'

Group 2:

Most likely scenario

Looking forward to 2020, the most likely scenario sees public relations in danger of splitting. Part of the problem here is that there is lack of understanding of public relations and what it can achieve in terms of tangible results. The practice may split into activities fitting best into strategic management consultancy, and other activities dealing mainly with tactical public relations and publicity. It will continue as now, misunderstood and not respected as a practice. It will be able to draw on a larger talent pool, and this should allow for increased diversity in the practice, but this will be a creeping, 'safe' diversity, based on compromises.

Best case scenario

In the best case scenario, public relations will be confident in what it can produce and will be driving the development of the market for public relations services, rather than simply responding to client demands. It will be integrated with other areas of management, and will be seen as indispensable and respected accordingly. It will be a diverse practice, representative of the wider population and wider interests.

Worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, the practice will be driven by market demands, pushed to tactical work that could easily be outsourced and open to factory style production. The practice will remain misunderstood and not respected, practiced by individuals fitting to stereotypes of what practitioners should be and disconnected from diversity in the wider society. Stereotypes now show some of the following characteristics:

- practitioners are essentially operatives
- female practitioners are managed; male practitioners manage
- the practice is in the process of being downgraded and
- is white, monocultural and ageist
- the practice, although articulate, is dominated by writing

Looking at the scenarios gave a number of conclusions and recommendations for action:

1. The scenarios suggest the need for improvements to education and training.
2. Those involved in the practice need to lead by example and leverage role models.
3. There remains a strong need to improve approaches to evaluation, to demonstrate the value that public relation delivers.
4. Practitioners need to develop knowledge and ownership of digital communications.
5. There remains a need for better definition of what public relations as a practice is meant to achieve – what is public relations and what is it to do?

CIPR Scotland, Aberdeen
21 July 2011, 2pm to 5pm, Aberdeen.

For the group in Aberdeen, a successful future for public relations practice to 2020 would involve:

- A better reputation for the practice
- More recognition as a profession
- Practice at the 'cutting edge'
- A better idea of impact
- Better measures of the practice
- Profitable, viable business activities
- Better integration with other areas of marketing

Two smaller groups developed scenarios using three variables chosen from this longer list:

Group 1 examined:

- Better reputation, running this together with recognition of public relations as a profession
- Better measurement of the practice, linking this with impact (performance metrics)
- Better integration with other areas of marketing

Group 2 examined:

- Practice at the 'cutting edge'
- Better measures of the practice
- A better reputation for the practice

Groups produced the following scenarios:

Group 1:

Most likely scenario

To 2020, public relations' reputation will remain much the same and little progress will be made towards developing better measures of the practice. This will have the potential to damage the reputation of the practice further. Public relations will continue to be seen as a separate, additional practice, rather than one integrated with areas of marketing.

Best case scenario

The best case scenario would see the practice develop a clear definition of itself which would achieve buy-in from the industry. The practice would move away from a preoccupation with measurement metrics and begin to manage the expectations that others have for measurement of the practice. Practitioners will pool resources with others providing advice on marketing and organization tasks and work cooperatively.

Worst case scenario

Public relations' reputation will diminish further, with downsides for the practice. Obsession with measurement will lead to attempts to measure and put a monetary value on every aspect of the practice. By trying to do everything, practitioners will become 'jacks of all trades' and quality of work in all areas of the practice will suffer.

Group 2:

Most likely scenario

Towards 2020, the practice will be using new technological possibilities wisely, remaining slightly behind the cutting edge, watching developments, researching their use and waiting to see how developments can be best used. Approaches to evaluation will be half-hearted, and attitudes to evaluation ambiguous, partly because of a lack of understanding of how public relations contributes to business and organizational performance. Developing a better reputation for the practice will continue to be a battle and reputation will move up and down. Change in reputation will be limited and it will be difficult for individuals to influence reputation.

Best case scenario

In the best case scenario, the practice will be seen as leading, breaking through boundaries, pioneering the use of new tools, integrating these into practice, and demonstrating adaptability. The value and importance of public relations will be recognized, and the practice will be seen as proficient in the use of methods available to it. Approaches to measurement will be standardized in the UK, leading to improved standards in practice. Public relations will have shed its current image and be respected and held in high regard, among clients (internal and external) and the public. Its worth will be demonstrated through more effective measurement, and it will have moved to the top of the agenda. It will have moved from 'Voldemort to Gandalf' – no longer a powerful black art but a force for good. The media will have been educated to the potential of its role, particularly in demonstrating corporate social responsibility.

Worst case scenario

The worst case scenario, looking towards 2020, sees public relations as failing to keep up with developments, falling so far behind as to be ineffective, as a practice isolated from the interests of the younger generation. Its use of measurement will be blind, and measurement will be carried out for the sake of it – others will see through this, and deny recognition to public relations seeing it as ineffective. Its reputation may slip further.

In discussion of the scenarios developed, a number of conclusions and recommendations for action were put forward:

1. Public relations practitioners must act as professionals, keep on top of developments and collectively do better in their work, improving their use of the tools available to them
2. Efforts to improve public relations must be collective, not individual
3. To stay on the cutting edge, there need to be ways of sharing best practice and the practice needs to embrace a new generation of talent
4. Industry bodies need to commit to research and development, carrying out research into new methods. These efforts should be headed by industry leaders
5. New tools need to be assessed against media requirements and the coverage they offer
6. The purpose of evaluation should be questioned to make it more meaningful
7. The continuing importance of evaluation must be recognized

Group 1 realized in discussion that examining public relations and its better integration with other areas of marketing assumed that public relations is a part of marketing. They broadened their discussion to look at public relations as a practice that should be integrated with marketing and other areas of management.

CIPR Scotland, Glasgow
22 July 2011, 9am to 12 noon, Glasgow.

For the group in Glasgow, a successful future for public relations practice to 2020 would involve:

- Skillful practitioners
- Opportunities for training
- Higher and required standards of practice
- A form of 'chartered status' for junior staff
- Greater understanding of public relations – it should be seen as more than 'window dressing' or something anyone can do
- The practice moving on from being the first target for cuts
- Buy-in from senior management
- Closer collaboration with other areas of management, such as human resources
- A healthy, successful media sector

Two smaller groups developed scenarios using three variables chosen from this longer list:

Group 1 examined:

- Skillful practitioners
- Greater understanding of public relations – it should be seen as more than 'window dressing' or something anyone can do
- A healthy, successful media sector

Group 2 examined:

- Higher and required standards of practice, combining this with opportunities for training
- Buy-in from senior management, combining this with understanding of public relations
- A healthy, successful media sector

Groups produced the following scenarios:

Group 1:

Most likely scenario

The impact of the number of people joining public relations practice will force the development of standards. There will be a need for full collaboration of industry bodies such as CIPR and PRCA to ensure proper integration of digital and social media into the practice. The definition of what it means to be a chartered practitioner will need to change to incorporate issues raised by the current controversy over media and organization relationships revealed by the controversy around The News of the World and journalistic practices. The CIPR will need to encourage the development of the practice by reducing costs relating to training and chartered practitioner status.

Current – 2011 – scandals may possibly add to the lack of trust in public relations. There will be more pressure for evaluation and analysis of public relations (not monetary analysis). The definition of public relations will have to become more precise to incorporate public affairs, social media, roles involved in public relations, and what it means. Public relations is more and more discussed in the media, and names of practitioners will become better known.

In the media sector, there will be more engagement with the media as an outcome of current issues. There will be changes in the media landscape and there will be more collaboration with the media, beyond simple contact or antagonism. The media will redefine themselves, their role, and will consolidate.

Best case scenario

The best case scenario sees practitioners buying into the idea of developing their skills and taking the initiative to do this. Efforts here will need to start in the schools, where public relations can be offered as a career option. Emphasis on skills in practice will help public relations' credibility and may possibly lead on to more public relations employment opportunities. There may be an opening for the UK to set a standard for the rest of the world, creating opportunities for UK specialists and the development of global networks.

In the best case scenario, trust in the practice increases and public relations is defined more precisely. Evaluation and analysis become essential and the practice works with colleges and universities ("what it's like in an office/professional environment"). Codes of conduct follow, as do more jobs and better salaries.

The media sector rebounds, with a comeback for trusted specialist and local media and engagement through social media. More people get more information and knowledge from media sources. Media as businesses are sustainable, and able to take on challenges from public relations, as well as to assist public relations.

Worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, standards may go down with increased numbers of people coming into the practice, where their entry is not managed properly and where they bring poorly developed skills – for example, in English – into the practice. The spread of public relations into organizations and agencies may dilute the skills currently available to the practice. Professional bodies may fail to take the initiative and set up the necessary regime for all to sign up to – to ensure that all are skilled.

Some sectors may weaken public relations, by allowing junior staff lacking skills to carry out public relations work. Roles may be diluted – as advertising agencies go, public relations may take on more, but work less well. The reputation of public relations may suffer as a result of lack of skills or scandals arising from poor public relations work. Salary levels may slip in the short term and jobs may be lost, for example in local government.

In the media, jobs will be lost. The media will fail to adapt and to accommodate to new media and technology, and will continue to fail to understand public relations. Fewer media outlets will limit public debate. There will continue to be a lack of Scottish stories in national media.

Group 2:

Most likely scenario

Towards 2020, more importance will be placed on the standards – in behavior, ethics and competence – of public relations practitioners by the organizations they work for, and practitioners will be expected to undertake continuing professional development to meet required standards. There will be more buy-in to, and realization of, the importance of public relations by senior management. There will also be greater realization of that reputation management is important. Social media will grow, creating more reputational risk for organizations, partly because social media will be unregulated.

Best case scenario

In the best case scenario, the majority of practitioners will be recognized by a strong professional body (CIPR), and will see the need for standards and training. Organizations will seek to employ well-trained practitioners with CIPR membership. By 2020, all organizations will have a public relations team/capability and commitment to public relations, which will be represented within the senior management team and involved at very early stages in dealing with any issue. It will no longer be an after-thought. 2020 will see responsible behaviour from 'organized' media and social media will be regulated.

Worst case scenario

In this, practitioners do not recognize the need for standards, and have no respect for standards and training. There is a lack of incentives for training, and membership of professional bodies is in decline. Public relations is still seen as a luxury and not as a necessity, and there is a lack of belief in the public relations profession, as public relations is seen as spin, manipulation and a force for evil. By 2020, there may only be digital news – no print – and news will be dumbed down, fast-paced, not in-depth and unregulated.

Conclusions and recommendations:

1. The CIPR should provide guidance to organizations looking to employ public relations staff
2. The CIPR should be seen as the leading body for public relations practitioners and as an authoritative body
3. The CIPR should set minimum training/skills required for members
4. CIPR members/chartered practitioners should be seen as the leading professionals in the UK
5. Public relations professionals should see training as a must – the CIPR should provide relevant training. Membership and training should be affordable
6. Practitioners should represent – do their own public relations – for the practice
7. Public relations should be more proactive, rather than be forced into situations
8. Scotland should not be ignored, as a country
9. There is a need to re-evaluate definitions of the practice, roles and codes of conduct
10. There is a need for more collaboration with further and higher education
11. For the CIPR, there should be more engagement with members on a face-to-face basis, rather than through email
12. The CIPR should raise its own profile
13. There is a need for closer work with human resources on job roles and requirements
14. Practice would benefit from greater use of evidence, and scenarios
15. Social media guidelines will require frequent updating
16. Improvements are necessary in discussions with the media
17. There must be follow-ups to exercises like this!

CIPR Scotland, Edinburgh 22 July 2011, 3pm to 6pm, Edinburgh.

For the group in Edinburgh, a successful future for public relations practice to 2020 would involve:

- Public relations will be seen as a valued profession
- High standards of practice
- Public relations will be at the heart of decision-making (with a seat on the board)
- Public relations being seen as business-critical
- Innovation and creativity
- Sophisticated measurement
- An ability to show the impact of practice
- Proven social value
- A diverse workforce
- The practice being seen as communication, rather than spin
- Demonstrable cost-effectiveness
- Well trained practitioners
- A practice that is trusted, respected and well regulated

Two smaller groups developed scenarios using three variables chosen from this longer list:

Group 1 examined:

- Public relations being seen as business-critical
- High standards of practice
- Innovation and creativity

Group 2 examined:

- Demonstrable cost-effectiveness
- Sophisticated measurement
- Public relations will be at the heart of decision-making (with a seat on the board)

Groups produced the following scenarios:

Group 1:

Most likely scenario

By 2020, the CIPR will continue to be a respected body and the profession will still be seen as making a valued contribution, particularly to the bottom line. Public relations will demonstrate value at every level, because of its role in events, which unfold 24/7. It will retain the capacity to act as the social conscience of organizations. Public relations practitioners will be innovators, driven, and ahead of the game. There will be more CIPR accredited practitioners, more formal qualifications and more opportunities for on-line learning and the sharing of best practice. Practitioners will be better able to use/exploit and keep on top of new communication channels. There will be expectations that public relations is more of a science than an art, backed up by measurement. Training and learning encourage practitioners to come up with creative solutions. The practice will involve more talking directly to the public in creative ways. More practitioners will have a seat on the board.

Best case scenario

In this, public relations practitioners will be seen as essential advisors, and able to demonstrate bottom line impact. With the passing of traditional media, the practice will exploit new media opportunities/options and budgets for public relations will increase. Reputation will be clearly linked to share price. By 2020 in the best case scenario, practitioners will be completely trusted as professionals. Continuing professional development will be seen as essential, as will the sharing of best practice. Awards for professional practice will be valued, and award programmes will be high profile. Public relations will be seen as leading, ahead of the curve, and 'the place to go' for solutions. There will be systems in place to ensure quick adoption of new channels and techniques.

In short: all organizations have a communications/public relations practitioner on the board. Trusted and credible, they keep their skills honed and their antennae sharp. They lead the way in communication with audiences. They are responsive and aware of new technological developments and work well with other functions to communicate in the best way possible, evidenced by hard evaluation.

Worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, the roles of public relations advisors will be stolen by others, as the practice is seen as "failing to rise to the occasion," a profession that cannot keep up with expectations. There may be high profile tarnishing of the practice by individuals or organizations. Practitioners will remain outside the boardroom, and the practice will be seen as 'fluffy.' Public relations budgets will be cut. There will be too many 'scrappy' public relations courses, while the CIPR wobbles on standards.

Competition between professional bodies damages the practice, which has regulation imposed upon it. Awards schemes fold. By 2020, the practice will be over-saturated with technology, overwhelmed

by channels, and stuck in old ways, using traditional media, old techniques and old measures such as AVEs. The public relations specialism will be undermined by others.

In short: the industry will have been tarnished by poor practice or a scandal. No regulation has been imposed. We are still stuck in the old ways of communicating, using the media. We are irrelevant – our role has been stolen by other industries.

Group 2:

Most likely scenario

Looking at cost effectiveness, measurement questions and whether or not public relations will be at the heart of decision-making going forward to 2020, it is most likely that the practice will have to work harder to maintain budgets, and will have to do more with less, relying on greater creativity to do this. Budgets will continue to have an impact on evaluation, and there will be pressures to find free evaluation tools. Practitioners will be involved in a constant struggle to get their voices heard at the highest levels of decision-making.

Best case scenario

In this, public relations will be recognized as cost-effective, and will be a chosen discipline within marketing, coming to be seen as more effective than direct marketing. This will be reflected in budget allocation. Robust, reliable and simple measurement approaches will be in place and easily understood, and directly correlated with objectives and business plans. Practitioners will be involved in business planning, as there is greater understanding of what public relations can deliver. Public relations will be seen as integral – public relations and communications will be mainstreamed throughout organizations and everyone will recognize their part in reputation management.

Worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, public relations will be cut from budgets or budgets will be reduced. Pressures of work and on budgets will result in a decrease in attempts to measure public relations activities, and failures to evaluate public relations will lead to loss of reputation for the practice. The practice will continue to be seen as an 'add-on' or 'necessary evil,' leading to unreasonable cuts in staff and budgets.

Conclusions and recommendations:

1. We need global, industry standards and guidelines on recognized evaluation (including guidance on how to value keeping stories out of the media)
2. These would allow us to show how cost effective public relations is, but we will need to go further to show the corporate value of the practice, to get a seat on the board and demonstrate that public relations is business critical
3. Public relations has to be shown to be intrinsic throughout the organization, establishing a culture of communication and customer care at all levels. This requires a cultural change, to be led by us (communicators)
4. There must be buy-in from the top down, which means taking part in a conversation about where the organization is going
5. Priorities and focus must be set from above to allow public relations and communications to be more strategic
6. Development of public relations tactics should be creative and cost-effective
7. No gloss, no gimmicks – just results that affect reputation

CIPR Cymru, Cardiff
27 July 2011, 4pm to 7pm, Cardiff.

For the group in Cardiff, a successful future for public relations practice to 2020 would involve:

- Profitability and financial growth
- Definition of public relations as a business and a clear perception of what the practice involves
- A good reputation for the practice
- Respect
- The practice being seen as adding value
- Keeping pace with developments, in the media and technology, and demonstrated adaptability
- Change in the practice to reflect changes in the wider culture
- The practice becoming “king of the marketing mix”
- Standardization across the board (to include measures of the practice)
- The practice seen as essential to democracy
- Integration
- Qualified, professionally recognized staff
- Public relations being seen as an attractive career prospect
- Greater public understanding of what public relations involves
- Public relations skills being shared, expected of CEOs, with practitioners acting as advisors

Two smaller groups developed scenarios using three variables chosen from this longer list:

Group 1 examined:

- Keeping pace with developments, in the media and technology, and demonstrated adaptability
- The practice being seen as adding value
- The practice seen as essential to democracy

Group 2 examined:

- Keeping pace with developments, in the media and technology, and demonstrated adaptability
- Profitability and financial growth
- Public relations skills being shared, expected of CEOs, with practitioners acting as advisors

Groups produced the following scenarios:

Group 1:

Most likely scenario

Examining the ability of the practice to keep pace with developments, to demonstrate added value and contribute to democracy, the group suggested that by 2020 the practice is most likely to keep pace with developments, but there will be a blurring of boundaries in communication. There may be a weakening of perceptions that the public relations discipline is needed, that middlemen need to be cut out. In Wales, there are good perceptions of public relations' value in reaching communities, but in the UK as a whole the success of practice will depend on ability to demonstrate how the practice should be evaluated. Public relations will continue to debate how it demonstrates value as the communication context continues to change. The practice's contribution to the workings of democracy will be clearer in Wales, where there is less cynicism, the practice is more community-based and government is achieving more respect. In the UK generally, there is growing cynicism and perception that the public are misled and excluded. This will lead to a growth of alternative sources of, and channels for, information.

Best case scenario

In this, public relations will lead the way in changes and in developments in communication as applied in society. The practice will be seen as key in developing a good reputation and increasing transparency of organizations and companies. Public relations will be seen as adding measureable value (able to change perceptions and motivate), and so valuable as to have a seat on the board. The expertise of practitioners will be valued and valuable in itself, but value will not be measured only in statistical terms. In the best case scenario, government will respect the value of independent media and non-politicized public relations. People will trust authoritative sources and there will be popular support for the need for, and value of, professional standards in journalism and public relations.

Worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, technology, communications and society evolve, but public relations is behind the curve and others, in marketing, step in. As greater transparency in communication develops, public relations is excluded or seen as negative due to its reputation. It will be seen as an expensive add-on, 'nice to have' or a source of 'added risk.' Some of the routine tasks of the practice will be automated. People will distrust anything mediated, meaning people will begin to trust anecdote and unmediated information more.

Group 2:

Most likely scenario

Looking at the practice keeping pace with developments, its profitability and the extent to which public relations skills will be shared going forward to 2020, the practice will see further decline in the print media, advancement of social media and a younger generation coming through, requiring constant re-education. Who will be in charge of this? Will practitioners become jacks of all trades? By 2020, competence in the use of social media will be up across the board, and there will be competition with complementary agencies using the same technologies to reach audiences and tell stories. With fewer traditional outlets increasing amounts of time will be spent on new outlets. Competencies will be up but companies and clients will have to put more focus on re-education to stay ahead. It's possible that public relations agencies will no longer be called public relations agencies. There is still a fight between advertising, marketing and communications agencies over who owns digital communication.

Public relations will realize new revenue streams, but old revenue streams will still be going. Public relations may get a share of falling advertising revenues. By 2020, the recovery will be up, so profits will also hopefully be up, but these will be shared due to a proliferation of agencies (by 2020, there will have been an increase in digital specialists, with fewer new entrants to the market). We'll see globalization of media and skills, and could see practitioners across the globe competing, with adverse effects on profitability.

There will be increased awareness of the importance of public relations at board level, and our skills in public relations will be integrated into business objectives. There will still be some scepticism towards public relations. By 2020, awareness of public relations and digital communication will mean that some SME bosses will consider themselves sufficiently skilled in communication.

Best case scenario

In this, all public relations practitioners will be ahead of the curve in relation to developments in digital communication and seen as guardians of these forms of communication, ahead of advertising and marketing specialists. Public relations practice will boom as advertising revenues divert to public relations. It will be easier to work with global clients using digital communication. Traditional revenue streams will still be good, so new revenue streams will be supplementary. Perceptions of the practice and its value will be up, and so will fees. Public relations practitioners will be among the top advisors in business, well trained, respected and trusted. There will be greater awareness of public relations at board level, and public relations will be integrated into business planning.

Worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, public relations will be overtaken by advertising and marketing agencies as message carriers. There will be a dwindling number of public relations agencies as the practice is no longer relevant. Spending on public relations will go elsewhere as public relations is seen as irrelevant against demand for digital skills. The practice will be affected by competition from all agencies due to convergence and the use of unskilled mavericks. The nature of society in 2020 will mean that long-term reputation planning is redundant. We will be in a continuing slump. Public relations will be an afterthought, not joined to business objectives or showing value. Crises will be mismanaged and reputation will be damaged. The practice will be seen as irrelevant in a fast-paced society.

Conclusions and recommendations:

1. Public relations practice has to understand and embrace change – we must continue to learn, through constant re-education
2. The ‘old chestnut’ – public relations needs to do public relations for public relations. We must become capable to demonstrating value, professional values, and the value of the contribution we make to democratic society
3. There is a need for stronger codes (of conduct and of ethics) and understanding of these
4. In government, there is a need to work for a clearer separation of political communication and government information work, since confusion of the two has had a negative impact on public relations
5. There is a need for a greater public understanding of how the media and public relations work together, through media studies education
6. There is a need to address the question of why the CIPR has such a small percentage of the large group of practitioners known to be working in the UK in membership
7. There is a need for arrangement for constant re-education
8. How will public relations stay on top of developments – how will the CIPR, consultancy management, encourage the discipline to stay current?
9. How will public relations deal with convergence – of communications, advertising and marketing agencies – and maintain share of resources allocated to advertising and public relations?
10. Practitioners need to have pride in what they do – will this happen?
11. Practice will evolve differently in Wales – there is an emphasis on ethics in practice and training. The Welsh Assembly is subject to public scrutiny, and the Welsh media are enfeebled. There is a growth in popular action, directed at a more accessible assembly. The Welsh language and culture are sources of action. Wales is a ‘network of networks’ with active voluntary organizations and participation in these. New media are fostering links among the networks. In-house practitioners don’t see themselves as ‘public relations practitioners,’ taking other titles. There are few HQs in Wales, and less separate spend on public relations services.

CIPR East Anglia, Norwich
1 August 2011, 10am to 1pm, Norwich

For the group in Norwich, a successful future for public relations practice to 2020 would involve:

- Recognition as a profession
- Fighting off clients, a lucrative practice
- Trust
- Innovation
- Being strategic, rather than tactical
- Relevance
- No amateurs
- Presence in the board room
- Strength and confidence
- Establishment of the value of reputation
- A £10bn business
- More profit-sharing and cooperative working
- Integration and management of all channels
- Better resources, time for education
- Better research
- Better evaluation (better measurement)
- An ability to be contradictory, to find other ways of doing things
- A break away from “still shoving out press releases”

Two smaller groups developed scenarios using three variables chosen from this longer list:

Group 1 examined:

- Reputation/ Recognition as a profession
- Better evaluation (better measurement)
- Innovation

Group 2 examined:

- Being strategic, rather than tactical
- Recognition as a profession
- Evaluation

Groups produced the following scenarios:

Group 1:

Most likely scenario

Examining whether or not that practice will be viewed as professional, evaluation and innovation, the group suggested that by 2020 the practice is most likely to remain static, taking no risks and opting for safety. It will be made up of ‘yes people’ and possibly subject to statutory regulation. Approaches to evaluation will stay the same, there will be no guidelines to follow, and evaluation will still be a ‘guessing game.’ In terms of the practice’s ability to innovate and change, there will be a failure to see opportunities, for example to incorporate social media. We will continue to be reactive, not proactive, a minor voice in the industry and will continue to fail to recognize and audit issues.

Best case scenario

In this, by 2020 public relations will be proactive and self-regulating, seen as clean, honest and ethical, respected with a professional reputation (matched by professional levels of pay). The practice will be valued, and represented or advising at board level. It will be seen as crucial to success, a 'make or break' practice, and strategic. With buy-in from board level and fellow professionals, the practice will work to objectives and KPIs, will be understood by others educated in what public relations can contribute. It will have a 100% success rate ('all hits'), having better monitoring tools and professional guidelines (from CIPR). The practice will achieve 'synchronicity' between fresh talent and experience, and will be expert in the use of social media. The practice will encourage passion, honesty and integrity, and will be unafraid to fail, becoming more skillful in evaluating risk and drawing on a global perspective. Relevance will drive innovation and change. The practice should be fun, stretching practitioners to develop and learn.

Worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, public relations will be reactive, synonymous with bad news as a part of corrupted journalism, and seen as dishonest. It will be untargeted, just 'fire-fighting,' taking payment for manipulation, 'organized lying' and wasting journalists' time. Max Clifford remains the most prominent practitioner ('chair of CIPR!'). In evaluation, the practice stays focused on column inches, with a low success rate, with no-one seeing value of results achieved in practice. Public relations will be overtaken by other professions, and on the back foot. We become too conservative, dull and predictable ('no fun'), while CIPR fails to lead from the front or innovate.

Group 2:

Most likely scenario

Looking at the practice as strategic, professional and as one making use of evaluation going forward to 2020, the practice will provide advice at board level, but will still be largely tactical, drawing on a mix of technical and managerial skills. It will be better planned and able to draw on some budgetary resources. It will show increasing professionalism, with more employers funding opportunities for practitioner skill development and general development. Qualifications in public relations will be promoted to HR and employers. By 2020, the practice will have developed better evaluation tools and thinking and will be making use of a better mix of quantitative and qualitative evaluation.

Best case scenario

In the best case scenario, public relations will command realistic budgets and will be seen as an equal in the boardroom, as well as able to show financial value of work. Practitioners will be involved in strategic planning at the outset and there will be realistic expectations of public relations. The ethical standards of the practice will be established. Chartered and registered status will lead to recognition and skill development. Public relations will have good recognition among fellow professionals and the public. The CIPR will be the authoritative voice of the profession. Research and evaluation will be plugged in, integral and universally applied, and there will be industry-accepted evaluation tools.

Worst case scenario

In this, public relations will still be shoving out press releases, and brought in at the last minute, when things go wrong. Unrealistic expectations will be held of the practice, and there will be no budget for public relations. Practitioners will be seen as amateurs, and there will be a lack of professional skills and professional development. The practice will have a poor public image, and practitioners will be seen as 'spin doctors' involved in telling lies. At board level and elsewhere, little will be seen of public relations' performance data. Nothing will have changed – AVEs will still be recognized, and outputs not outcomes assessed.

Conclusions and recommendations:

1. The CIPR should develop as the voice of the profession (and should have the best public relations in the country)
2. There is a need to examine who speaks for the profession (parallel with the CBI – is there a need for a CEO, or an independent, salaried president, in office for a longer term (3 years?) and able to become the face of the profession?) On a matter like hacking, what did the CIPR have to say on the fundamental issues involved? The CIPR should also comment on bad public relations – public relations can come to be associated with incompetence
3. The CIPR should lead on new developments and innovation (looking back, we haven't done enough)
4. The CIPR should promote practitioner qualifications to HR and employers (in health care, for example, people have to be chartered/qualified. By 2020, greater progress should have been made of chartered status for practitioners)
5. Lack of self regulation may lead to regulation
6. There is a need to strengthen codes, revisit ethical questions. The practice needs to be clean, honest and ethical, and chartered status very important
7. Public relations is not a communication practice, but one that makes use of communication – do we need to rebrand the practice?
8. Practitioners need greater self confidence (from access to the board, and also from changes in the way they see themselves)
9. Much greater recognition needs to be given to CPD – what percentage of CIPR members are doing this?
10. It would be useful to have an effective mentoring system in place
11. We need to synchronize experience and fresh talent?

CIPR Special Interest Groups, London 4 August 2011, 5pm to 8pm, London

For the special interests group in London, a successful future for public relations practice to 2020 would involve:

- Respect
- Trust
- A clear definition of the practice, which would be clearly understood
- Diversity and inclusion
- A practice that is well rewarded and
- Profitable
- Continuing growth
- A stronger practice
- Public relations being seen as an attractive career and as
- A boardroom function
- A practice viewed as authoritative and expert
- Accredited practice
- A practice needing qualifications and
- Experience
- Integration

Two smaller groups developed scenarios using three variables chosen from this longer list:

Group 1 examined:

- Respect
- In discussion, the group decided that it was important to consider the characteristics of the ideal public relations practitioner for 2020
- Integration

Group 2 examined:

- Respect
- The profitability of the practice
- A clear definition of the practice, which would be clearly understood

Groups produced the following scenarios:

Group 1:

Most likely scenario

Examining the respect given to the practice, characteristics of the ideal practitioner and the degree of integration of the practice with other disciplines, the group suggested that by 2020 the practice will remain fuzzy, perceived as an element in marketing. There will be a general lack of understanding of the practice and a need to monitor standards. There will not be enough high level practitioners – the status quo remains, but new blood will be raising the bar. By 2020, there will still be a fight towards integrated communication, involving a number of bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Marketing, PRCA and CIPR.

Best case scenario

In this, by 2020 public relations will be a presence in the board room, regularly approached for comment. Practitioners will be professional and trusted and public relations will be attractive as a career, attracting top talent and drawing on a mix of practical and theoretical knowledge at a high level. The practice will be well remunerated, influential, strategic and authoritative, thriving, inclusive and diverse. A huge CIPR membership will be signed up to ongoing CPD and a code of conduct. The ideal practitioner will be a CIPR member, accredited and appropriately qualified across all relevant areas. He or she will be: professional, ethical, enthusiastic, energetic, creative, flexible, agile, perceived as expert, and will have CPD in DNA. Practitioners will work to clearer cut job roles and job definitions (setting out, for example, what it means to be an account executive, manager or director, in terms of expertise and knowledge). A clearer pathway will map progression from entry to high level. The practice will be strong and respected, led by one professional body showing a better understanding of communications. It will provide best value and service for clients, drawing on a good spread of knowledge and qualifications and delivering better business outcomes. Every organization will have integrated communication. Public relations will add value and exceed expect, attracting the best talent and working under one umbrella phrase.

Worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, public relations will have a poor reputation, still involving spin doctors. It will be seen as shady and mistrusted. There will be no growth in the practice, which will lose talent and possibly be absorbed into marketing. There will also be low levels of training and development. There will be no professional body for practitioners, and public relations will be seen as a second rate career. For practitioners, there will be no clear career progression and no measurement of standards. There will be a lack of direction to the practice. Practitioners will have no influence, no voice, and will be seen as prepared to compromise their values, in a poorly paid practice. Practice will be further fragmented, to the detriment of the profession, with overlapping roles and poor value for money.

Group 2:

Most likely scenario

Looking at the respect given to the practice, its profitability and the extent to which the practice is clearly defined and understood, the group suggested that by 2020 the practice is most likely to see little change in the amount of respect accorded the practice, which is relatively low. Perceptions of the practice will be driven by media portrayal of the practice (as in Ab Fab, The Thick of It etc). Many do not see it as a profession and some in practice are committed to CPD. There will still be confusion on how we measure profitability and economic value of the practice, and we will see a gradual consolidation of public relations agencies. Public relations will still and often be misunderstood, and the public will have a narrow perception of the practice. There will be a lack of awareness of the different disciplines and breadth of the practice, with grey areas between public relations and reputation/marketing/ advertising/policy/(social media??)

Best case scenario

In the best case scenario, public relations will be seen more as a profession, and a function which must be carried out by a public relations professional, respected by the CEO. It will be a boardroom function, with public relations reporting to the CEO. There will be positive role models in the media. All practitioners will be committed to CPD. Public relations' contribution to GDP and the economy will be recognized. Looking at profitability, there will be increased investment in public relations, whose economic value will be recognized by government. The practice will be well rewarded, and will attract graduates to the profession. The financial value of reputation management will be on the balance sheet. By 2020, there will be a broadly accepted definition of the practice and practitioners will recognize that they belong to the industry/profession. There will be public understanding of the content and value of the profession, which will need qualified practitioners with an expert skill set. The CIPR and its role will be clearly defined.

Worst case scenario

In this, public relations will be marked by more scandal, and will remain unrecognized, seen as a poor relation of advertising and marketing. There will be a flight of talent from the practice, and there may be no CIPR. The practice will be reduced and less profitable, poorly rewarded and paid. There will be a lack of career progression in a practice seen as optional or irrelevant. The practice may be absorbed into advertising and marketing, and ignored. There will be multiple and competing definitions of the practice, as well as competing professional bodies. People with dubious or shallow motives will be attracted to the profession.

Conclusions and recommendations:

1. We need to work towards a single, strong, respected professional body covering all aspects of communication: a range of professional qualifications, sharing experience, knowledge and best practice, developing defined career progression routes, with all practitioners committed to CPD, qualifications and codes of conduct (Group 1)
2. Need to develop an integrated and meaningful toolkit to measure impact and value of communications against business objectives, to be used as a standard by all practitioners and their employers (Group 1)
3. 'Public relations' as a term should be scrapped, to provide a clean slate for communicators, lose the historic stigma, help foster respect, and open new business opportunities (Group 1)
4. There should be increased emphasis on qualifications and training, and increased use of and recognition for CPD (Group 2)
5. We need to quantify profession's contribution to GDP and economy (Group 2)
6. Reputation should be identified as balance sheet asset (separated out from goodwill) (Group 2)
7. We need to develop a clear articulation of the definition of public relations and reputation management and get consensus on this from a broad spectrum of the profession (Group 2)

**CIPR Greater London group, London
11 August 2011, 5pm to 8pm, London**

For the group in London, a successful future for public relations practice to 2020 would involve:

- A creative practice
- Making highly integrated use of media and
- Showing flexibility in application of media
- Accepted measurement
- A trusted practice
- A strategic role
- Board representation
- Having professional status (like a GP)
- An ability to attract the best recruits
- Diversity (reflecting society)
- Financial success
- Accredited practice
- A resolved relationship with advertising and marketing
- Relevance (this was added to the list as Group 2 began their discussions)

Two smaller groups developed scenarios using three variables chosen from this longer list:

Group 1 examined:

- Having professional status (like a GP)
- Highly integrated use of media
- Accepted measurement

Group 2 examined:

- Diversity (reflecting society)
- Having professional (and trusted) status (like a GP)
- Relevance

Groups produced the following scenarios:

Group 1:

Most likely scenario

Examining the professional status of the practice, integrated use of media and accepted measurement, the group suggested that by 2020 the practice will be likely to require global, international mobility and increased appreciation of ethical standards. There will be a universal acceptance of the need for professional status based on accreditation, which will aid career advancement. Use of media will be subject to regulation and will remain siloed, with – as currently – recruitment bringing in specialists in the use of particular media. By 2020, measurement will focus on a mixture of output and outcome measures, used a kind of ‘morphed’ AVEs, and there will be improved technology metrics.

Best case scenario

In this, by 2020 public relations will have global accreditation, and only accredited practitioners will be recruited. Practitioners will be licensed, will take an ethical stance in practice, and will be trusted and respected. They will have the ability to work quickly and flexibly with social media (within a broader mix of media). Approaches to measurement will have won recognition – if not love – from chief financial officers. Agreed tools will have been accepted to measure spend and impact, and public relations will be able to demonstrate its value across the business, drawing on simple, effective metrics focused on outcomes.

Worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, public relations will see declining membership in professional bodies and may be swallowed up into marketing. The practice will have less access to senior management. It will have a 'head in sand' attitude to developments in media, which will be unaddressed. The practice will have lost control of use of media, and removed from partnerships making use of the media. In measurement, the debate about how to measure public relations continues, with no consensus. Steps backward will have been taken, and measurement will be entirely based on AVEs. Measures of output dominate.

Group 2:

Most likely scenario

Looking at the diversity of the practice, its professional status, and whether or not the practice will still be relevant in 2020, the group suggested there is likely to be a small increase in diversity (which involves greater diversity in terms of ethnic backgrounds, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, and social background). More women will be setting up their own agencies, but for women certain sectors, such as the City, will remain difficult to penetrate. There will be more women on boards, and more apprenticeship schemes because of higher university fees.

There will be little change in the age composition of the practice, but a small increase in the number of disabled people in the practice thanks to home working etc. By 2020, the picture on professional status will remain mixed, with Max Clifford versus practitioners as strategic advisors. The practice will be driven by changes in technology and will not be reacting fast enough.

Best case scenario

In the best case scenario, public relations practice will be more representative of the wider society, allowing easier access to all. It will be trusted, on the board, seen as a profession, with practitioners highly qualified and accredited. It will be relevant, listened to, taken seriously, and practitioners will be known as reputation/trust managers, trust builders.

Worst case scenario

In this, there will be a backlash against standards of practice. Practice will not change at all, and become more insular. It will be mistrusted, with no control of reputation or flows of information. There will be no role for public relations practitioners, or voice for them in organizations, and they will be working in silos. The practice will disappear, taken over by advertising, marketing etc. News is accessed directly by citizens with no need for public relations people. The industry fails to keep up with changes.

Conclusions and recommendations:

1. There should be a vote on international licensing of the profession (Group 1)
2. Fifty per cent of practitioners should belong to a professional body (Group 1)
3. There should be stronger representation/profile building [of public relations practice] to students, employers and training bodies (Group 1)
4. There should be one global ethical code (Group 1)
5. Social media training should become a core part of CIPR/PRCA/University training (Group 1)
6. The public relations industry should end the debate on ownership of social media and move on to strategy regarding their use (Group 1)
7. Measurement training should become a core part of CIPR/PRCA/University training (Group 1)
8. There should be one agreed measurement score for the industry, focused more on outcomes (Group 1)
9. There is a need for better and continuous professional education, for recognized qualifications, regular assessments of both practice and theory, and a stronger code of conduct (Group 2)

In round-table discussion, reference was made to Philip Sheldrake's view of 'influence professionals,' with public relations practitioners being one group within a larger group of such professionals. A view

was also offered of the importance of the 'hacking' scandal, which is in some ways beneficial to public relations practice, because it shows that practitioners are influential.

CIPR Midlands group, Birmingham

For the group in Birmingham, a successful future for public relations practice to 2020 would involve:

- Optimum digital capability
- Profitable business performance
- Recognized formal evaluation (especially of digital practice)
- Transparency (in what we do, and how we add value)
- Board level buy-in
- Better media relations
- Having professional status (like a GP)
- An ability to engage with many stakeholders
- 'Decent' budgets
- All practitioners being good communicators

Two smaller groups developed scenarios using three variables chosen from this longer list:

Group 1 examined:

- Optimum digital capability
- Profitable business performance
- Recognized formal evaluation (especially of digital practice)

Group 2 examined:

- All practitioners being good communicators
- Recognized formal evaluation (especially of digital practice)
- Better media relations

Groups produced the following scenarios:

Group 1:

Most likely scenario

Examining the digital capability of the practice, its profitability and the development of approaches to evaluation, the group suggested that by 2020 the practice will see a growth of specialism (so for example in account teams there will be specialists in social media, account management and media relations). Digital practice will bridge the gap between communications and marketing, making use of advanced technology. There will be more regulation of the practice in a busy marketplace, and it will be hard to stand out in the crowd. There will be brand apathy. It will be a time of tight budgets and big expectations, but the practice will have increased credibility. The economy will still be tough, the recession will remain and conditions will be challenging. Budgets will have to work harder, but public relations is cheaper than advertising and better value. There will be a reallocation of budgets to public relations. There will be a drive to reduce over-servicing internally for agencies, and opportunities to develop new skills and segments. Evaluation will have evolved and improved – improvements will be small, but there will be no Holy Grail. We will have lost public relations value/AVE calculations, and will be looking at how public relations affects sales/footfall, website hits rather than circulations, and at spikes in interaction, footfall and sales. There will be greater awareness of the importance of evaluation and a focus on it, as well as a focus on behaviour changes and statistics to provide evidence of it.

Best case scenario

In this, by 2020 public relations will see digital communications on board level and recognized at board level, and will be lead the field in knowledge of digital communications. Practitioners will have formal training and qualifications in digital communications. Accountable evaluation of digital communication, which is simple and easy, will be available and digital communications will be integrated into campaigns. Monitoring and evaluation tools will be effective. Budgets will be increased because of recognized value, and there will be smarter working through specialisms. As evaluation methods improve, credibility will improve. There will buy-in from board level. In an expanding industry, competition will lead to quality, in staff, work and results. Over-servicing will be reduced and practitioners will be paid for what they do. Transparency in costs will mean that these will be easier to present, and it will be easier for clients to see what they are buying. It will be easier to say no and to pushback against client demands, and to make recommendations to clients. Public relations will have increased reputation and credibility. Agencies and departments will be multifunctional. The Holy Grail of evaluation will have been found and introduced, recognized at board level. Clients will understand it, as it will be easy to present and understand, and to integrate into practice. It will stand alongside other marketing measurements, and will increase public relations' credibility, leading to bigger salaries for public relations. Other industries will look to public relations, which will be leading the field, winning new business and growing as an industry.

Worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, public relations will lose out to advertising agencies, which will run campaigns. A skills gap will open as technology moves too fast and in face of information overload. Public relations loses the ability to identify influencers, as well as credibility with consumers and clients. There will be no budget for digital communications as clients and interns run campaigns. The practice becomes 'too digital' which alienates older professionals and traditional media are wiped out. The practice is subject to increased regulation. Public relations budgets are slashed or allocated elsewhere. Smaller agencies decrease in number and salaries are smaller. There is less recruitment to the practice and the quality of staff and executives diminishes. There is no buy-in to public relations at board level. The recession remains and deepens, and consultancies find they are involved in massive over servicing – 'working for free.' There are moves towards payment on results. The costs of training and keeping skills relevant rise. There are no improvements in evaluation methods and no recognized standards, ways of proving value. There are too many different theories of practice and everyone does their own thing, inconsistently. Boards and clients only want to see AVEs and the value of public relations depreciates. The practice is a slave to too many different opinions – is it a 'one size fits all' approach across different clients and sectors? As a practice, it is not able to change behaviours.

Group 2:

Most likely scenario

Looking at practitioners' communication skills, evaluation and developments in media relations, the group suggested that by 2020 there will be fewer graduates coming into the practice (there will be fewer graduates because of rising tuition fees). Experience will outweigh academic qualifications. There will be more social media channels. Practitioners will remain generalists rather than specialists, who will need to maintain writing skills and be involved in continuous development. We will need to convince at board level, but the goalposts will keep moving because of changes in the industry. Practitioners will understand the value of metrics and will be able to explain them to clients. Qualitative measures will exist alongside quantitative measures. Lip service will be paid to the Barcelona Principles. Clients will continue not to want to pay for evaluation. In the media by 2020, there will be more 'churnalism' but the public will be more media savvy and able to spot public relations. There will be more bloggers and use of multiple media channels. At the same time, there will be more use of tailored approaches to get coverage, and establish one-to-one communication.

Best case scenario

In the best case scenario, there will still be a print media industry. Practitioners will know what carries substance, which will be best for clients. They will be reactive and dynamic in response to situations and challenges, creative and able to identify influencers. They will recognize which social media channels will last and have excellent account and campaign management skills.

More talent will migrate to the Midlands. By 2020, there will be industry wide, agreed metrics, standards and regulations. There will also be reliable monitoring, transparent evaluation, and qualitative approaches will outweigh quantitative. Practitioners will be involved in defining metrics and clients will budget for evaluation.

Practitioners will be able to maintain relationships with a strong media industry and will still have 'little black books' of contacts. There will be a strong demand for balanced journalism. Practitioners will be able to identify most influential bloggers and journalists and respond to a shift back to print media channels. There are still story hungry media.

Worst case scenario

In this, practitioners' skills will die out because of social media. Graduates will be under-qualified and unemployable. Practitioners will lose business skills. There will be less opportunity for team work. London will be seen as the media hub. There will be cynicism regarding evaluation. There will be no formal evaluation, or on-line metrics. Quantitative approaches will outweigh qualitative approaches to evaluation. Social media channels will proliferate, and there will be no print or broadcast media. The media will be solely focused on social media, fed by untrained journalists and bloggers. Editorial skills will die out, and journalists will lack time.

In discussion of the scenarios developed, a number of conclusions and recommendations for action were offered:

1. In the interests of developing good practitioners, a mentoring process should be formalized, and the significance and value of mentors recognized
2. Organizations will need to invest in their people
3. Practitioners and organizations should share knowledge and best practice, through job swaps and networking
4. Organizations should be able to expect loyalty from individuals provided with training
5. There is need for public relations apprenticeships
6. There remains a need to develop and implement an industry standard for evaluation, to be adapted to different scenarios/challenges/objectives. It should emerge from consultation with business leaders.
7. Boards should have public relations professionals
8. Public relations evaluation should be built into business auditing activities
9. The industry should work with monitoring and evaluation agencies to develop standards for evaluation
10. Public relations should help journalists to keep the media industry thriving
11. The relationship between advertising and public relations should be improved to gain editorial coverage

In discussion of the scenarios and recommendations, evaluation was seen as a 'running thread.' The challenge in measurement and evaluation is how to measure changes in behaviour. There remains a need to educate business leaders on how public relations can help the bottom line.

The Midlands group also asked – "Are we fearful of the best case scenario? Working towards the best case scenario means becoming transparent, accountable and better at what we do."

**CIPR Greater London (second group)
19 September 2011, 5pm to 8pm, London**

For the second group in London, a successful future for public relations practice to 2020 would involve:

- A practice in which spin would be behind us
- A practice moving towards Grunig's fourth model (of two-way, symmetrical communication)
- A practice in which practitioners showed improved awareness of public relations as a profession
- Common agreement on definitions of the practice
- An understanding of the ethical framework for the practice, on the part of practitioners and the public
- A more coherent measurement framework
- A practice which reflects the wider society (not over-educated)
- Clear entry standards
- Developed CIPR qualifications
- Practitioners who are more 'ambidextrous' of mind
- A practice in which the role of the practitioner grows, in which agencies die, and there develop two streams – in-house and consultancies
- Public relations as a term surviving, or changing
- A removal of Haymarket's monopoly on commentary on the practice
- Opportunities to meet need for senior management development

Two smaller groups developed scenarios using three variables chosen from this longer list:

Group 1 examined:

- A practice in which practitioners showed improved awareness of public relations as a profession
- Practitioners who are more 'ambidextrous' of mind
- A practice in which the role of the practitioner grows, in which agencies die, and there develop two streams of practice – in-house and consultancies

Group 2 examined:

- Practitioners who are more 'ambidextrous' of mind
- A more coherent measurement framework
- A practice which reflects the wider society

Groups produced the following scenarios:

Group 1:

Most likely scenario

Considering improved awareness of the profession on the part of practitioners, critical ('ambidextrous') thinking and the growing role of the practitioner, the group said that by 2020 it was likely that there will be some improvement of awareness as the current generation of practitioners grow older. Non-members of CIPR and unqualified individuals will still be able to practice, but there will be gradual improvement in the profession. There will be improvement in thinking, but it will not be greatly different. There will be more strategic input, but at current proportions. Looking at the role of the practitioner, the term public relations dies off as a recognized term. Craft skills are provided and bought by other sectors, such as marketing and law. The most likely development here is also seen as the worst case development.

Best case scenario

In the best case scenario, the practice becomes a true profession, and practitioners qualify as professionals in terms of both experience and qualifications. Unqualified practitioners are known as something else (as in law and accounting). There is a clear difference between qualified and unqualified practitioners, and a stratified profession (for example, chartered practitioners, accredited practitioners). There is a broader, comprehensive understanding of what is involved in the profession at entry. Clients also understand the profession, as do the media who understand what is involved in high profile roles. There is also a clear definition of the thinking abilities required in practice, and improved thinking power at work in the practice. The practice will have vastly greater respect, and there will be an emphasis on the science of communication, not the art. In the best case, skills will divide between craft (delivered by agencies) and strategic practice (in consultancies and in-house). There will be a respect for the profession and professionals, and distinct disciplines in the practice. Spin will be dead. Clients will buy strategy, not tactics. They will understand better what they are buying, employ better practitioners in-house, and will not be buying copywriting etc. Current agencies will decline – they will be smaller, charge more, and provide connections and craft skills. The profession becomes a full communications package, including direct marketing, advertising – anything that influences reputation.

Worst case scenario

In this, 'public relations' ceases to be of use as a term. The profession fragments and becomes channel and skill focused, and practitioners have no overall strategic role. There is greater fragmentation of thinking, and lower placement of communication in the hierarchy. The worst development is also the most likely, looking at the role of the practitioner – as mentioned under the most likely scenario, the term public relations dies off as a recognized term. Craft skills are provided and bought by other sectors, such as marketing and law.

Group 2:

Most likely scenario

Looking at capabilities for thinking in the practice, a coherent framework for measurement and whether or not the practice will reflect the diversity of the wider society (gender, race, religion, age and socio-economic background), the group thought it most likely that by 2020 there will be no change in capabilities, recruitment and training. But there will be a shortfall, as there is more need for critical thinking. By 2020, AVEs will be dead, and the majority of programmes will involve some measurement. There will be some improvement in diversity.

Best case scenario

In the best case scenario, employers will hire, train and fire to upgrade their human capital for competitive advantage, if best practice public relations is seen to deliver competitive advantage. Measurement will be seen as a professional requirement, particularly at board level. There will be a proliferation of 'chief influence officers' and the practice will have outstanding examples of measurement that have led to performance improvement. Diversity will have increased slightly. There will be more encouragement to entrants to the practice, and diversity will be considered in active recruitment. Expectations will need to be set by CIPR and employers for recruitment for diversity.

Worst case scenario

In this, practitioners exclude and marginalize themselves by being so inadequate in critical thinking. Similarly, lack of measurement will lead to lack of credibility and marginalization. Measurement standards remain the same, but look worse as best practice elsewhere improves. Current mix in the practice remains the same – public relations is not recommended as a career by careers officers, or viewed as a viable career.

In discussion of the scenarios developed, a number of conclusions and recommendations for action were put forward:

- 1) For CIPR, there needs to be a meaningful, stratified membership with transparency of appointment at each level of membership
- 2) There needs to be enforced discipline
- 3) Externally, there is a need for effective public relations for public relations, measured through perception surveys
- 4) There need to be better links between practice and the academic study of public relations
- 5) Chartered practitioner status should be seen as the gold standard
- 6) Elevate training – give it a strategic element, and put in place CPD for senior people in the profession
- 7) Measurement should be a driver of improvement and success
- 8) There is a need to make chartered status mean more

Two questions: would legislation for the profession be beneficial (governing, for example, public affairs or internal communications practice)? By 2020, will public relations be anti-democratic or pro-democracy?

**CIPR West of England group
20 August 2011, 5pm to 8pm, Bristol**

For the group in Bristol, a successful future for public relations practice to 2020 would involve:

- A practice that had embraced changes in technology
- A practice taken seriously – and ideally represented – at board level
- A practice that makes its participants ‘rich, happy and famous’
- Public relations at the centre of marketing communications
- Identifiable streams of practice, in-house and in consultancies
- The CIPR and PRCA recognized and signed up to
- Clarification of areas of practice
- More specialization
- Standards of professionalism
- Practitioners able to immerse themselves in industry they are working in (for example, pharmaceuticals)
- A practice not represented by Max Clifford, parties or Ab Fab imagery
- A more experienced, older workforce

Two smaller groups developed scenarios using three variables chosen from this longer list:

Group 1 examined:

- A practice taken seriously – and ideally represented – at board level
- Public relations at the centre of marketing communications
- Identifiable streams of practice, in-house and in consultancies

Group 2 examined:

- Standards of professionalism
- Practitioners able to immerse themselves in industry they are working in (for example, pharmaceuticals)
- A more experienced, older workforce

Groups produced the following scenarios:

Group 1:

Most likely scenario

Examining the possibilities of public relations being taken seriously at board level, occupying a place at the centre of marketing communications and dividing into streams of practice, the group felt that by 2020 it was likely that there will be polarization. Those that 'get' public relations will continue to embrace the benefits and will be successful, while those that don't will revert to use of a simple information function (the press officer). By 2020, agencies will either be integrated or will have evolved into specialisms. There will be a continuation of current practice, with the growth of generalists and hyper specialists, working through small boutique agencies.

Best case scenario

In this, public relations will be seen as essential to success. Public relations is at the centre of marketing communications, having evolved from practical activation to content owners and providers to become the authors of media and self publication. All streams fall under 'public relations' on an equal footing. Diversity is valued and allows for specialism.

Worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, public relations is disregarded entirely, absorbed into marketing or an administration function. It is not at the centre of marketing communication, and does not exist, having been pushed out by other disciplines. There is no cohesion in the practice, and the streams of practice have become so individual they are unrecognizable and devalued.

Group 2:

Most likely scenario

Looking at whether or not the practice will be taken seriously at board level, whether or not public relations will have a place at the centre of marketing communications, and will divide into streams of practice, the group thought it most likely that by 2020 there will be little change from 2011. Public relations will still be seen as 'nice to have.' There will be best practice in some areas but no real across the board standards. Similarly, there will be pockets of best practice when it comes to immersion in particular industries, but immersion will often be the result of last minute swotting. As it is now, talent and experience is lost at certain life stages and due to the pressures of the profession.

Best case scenario

In the best case scenario, practitioners will only be able to practice if a member of the CIPR and/or PRCA adhering to a code of conduct and a form of professional standard of qualification. Public relations professionals will use insight based on real knowledge to apply effective public relations. Industry recognizes the benefits of this investment and knowledge. Public relations will be a profession that respects/values, rewards and retains experience no matter what the age or gender. In addition, stereotypes will have been removed – for example, that technology is only for the young.

Worst case scenario

In this, CIPR/PRCA membership dwindles and the organizations fold, leaving no professional body or standards. Public relations plans developed with no insight and based on little or no knowledge, using only assumptions or out-dated experiences. Everyone over the age of 40 is either out of work, or having to go freelance.

In discussion of the scenarios developed, a number of conclusions and recommendations for action were put forward:

- 1) Every CIPR member should lobby their companies to enforce professional standards.
- 2) Heads and chairs of CIPR should lobby government about the importance of public relations practice.
- 3) CIPR should be more prepared to police standards.
- 4) Public relations needs to stop questioning itself and debating its own position – it is itself and clear about what it is, but it also needs to re-invent itself, promote itself and educate as to what it involves
- 5) Public relations needs to claim its place in marketing communications – “occupy the land.”
- 6) Public relations is content creation – not at all media relations, it is brand and reputation building.

One of the groups compared public relations to bookselling. For booksellers, there is the prospect that supermarkets like Tesco sell books, and bookshops selling books compete with the supermarkets, and with specialist stores – like fishing shops – that also sell books. In a worst case scenario, bookshops go out of business. Public relations has to be like the best bookshop – specialist, complete, knowledgeable, a point of reference for all interested in books, and indispensable.

**CIPR North West
26 September 2011, 10am to 1pm, Manchester**

For the group in Manchester, a successful future for public relations practice to 2020 would involve:

- A practice that is vibrant, relevant and meaningful
- Delivering business benefit, real business impact, service into business
- A practice that is not an ‘add on’ or ‘nice to have’
- Strategic contribution
- Being more than media relations
- Not just serving as a marketing function
- Dealing with more audiences
- High quality practitioners
- A practice that encroaches on customer relations, and all aspects of a business
- Increased scope
- Senior people ‘getting it’
- Increased, higher skill levels
- Meeting challenges and flourishing

Two smaller groups developed scenarios using three variables chosen from this longer list:

Group 1 examined:

- Being more than media relations
- Strategic contribution
- Delivering business benefit, real business impact, service into business

Group 2 examined:

- Not just serving as a marketing function
- Being more than media relations
- High quality practitioners

Groups produced the following scenarios:

Group 1:

Most likely scenario

Examining whether or not public relations is more than media relations, able to make a strategic contribution and deliver business benefit, the group said that by 2020 the practice is likely to work with other audiences, as clients accept these and the importance of social media. The practice will be working with the same tools and a few new ones, with the same tactics. There will be a need for different campaigns and thought processes for social media audiences. Through social media, there is a conversation happening but it's unclear who is to deal with this – customer services, public relations or advertising. Some companies still don't have understanding of the importance of strategy in public relations. Lower budgets focus businesses on strategy rather than creative campaigns, and there is a need for more collaboration between different media spaces. There will be demands for proof – in financial terms – of campaign effectiveness (sales, footfall etc), and for instant results and reporting. Business impact will become the focus of campaigns and KPIs.

Best case scenario

In the best case scenario, new approaches to evaluation will validate social media and online activities. Clients will realize the benefits of new audiences – better than advertising – and develop a better understanding of interacting with them. Practitioners will be up-skilled and technically high powered to deal with two-way dialogue and huge audiences. There will be measureable, relevant and realistic objectives at the beginning of campaigns. More public relations professionals will be involved on the board, and there will be more skills in public relations – in data handling, statistics and strategy. Practitioners will no longer just be 'good with people.' Increased fees will be realized, as work is measureable and justified.

Public relations will be given chance/time to have business impact, through retained services. Business impact will be seen in the long term and clients will buy into public relations as a result. All clients get public relations and the impact it can have.

Worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, public relations is shrouded in mystique by technical terms. There is no real interaction with audiences, just noise. The new culture of social media not met, through restrictions on use of technology, or limitations within the team trying to work with social media. There is a continuing struggle with advertisers and direct marketing, and reputation and management consultants take over the strategic space. Clients equate coverage with immediate sales, and short term expectations regarding business impact are unrealistic.

Group 2:

Most likely scenario

Considering whether or not public relations would be seen as more than a marketing function, would deal with audiences other than the media, and the quality of public relations practitioners, the group felt that by 2020 it was likely that there would be pockets of those who 'get it' [public relations and its role]. Digital developments will have a positive impact on purchase of public relations services. Public relations will stay as a marketing tool and consolidate with social media and search engine optimization specialists. It will remain rooted in press releases, but there will be emphases on good content and creativity. The practice will continue to liaise with journalists, as business will still be nervous of the power of the media over reputation building. There will probably be more listening to general conversation. Public relations will still own the territory of media relations. Practitioners will make inroads strategically. There will be more vocational degrees. Entry will still be very competitive, and there will remain a lack of understanding of public relations' role in business.

Best case scenario

In the best case scenario, the buyers for public relations services will be MDs and CEOs. Public relations will provide ideas, inspiration and make a multifunctional contribution working with all stakeholders. Budgets will increase. Marketing itself will increase in value. Public relations will take a place alongside lawyers and accountants. The practice is involved in a direct conversation with end users, no matter who influences them, we're working directly with them. The practice is of intrinsic worth to a business. High value merits higher investment, advising on the value of media, who is important to your business. Public relations is a champion for journalism. By 2020, practitioners will be strategic heavyweights – they have youth, are business people, 'brains', entrepreneurs, working in a practice on an equal footing with lawyers and management consultants. They will have a 'normal' degree (implications for training), entering the business through articles and gaining direct experience, and better paid at entry level.

Worst case scenario

In this, people will do public relations themselves, responding to the threat of social media – CEOs will be doing their own tweeting. Budgets for public relations activities will be lower, and public relations will be swallowed up by other disciplines. There will be an erosion of the 'dark arts' skills of public relations. The practice will fail to attract the best people. In the media, we will lose the daily newspaper – newspapers will be features led. Public relations will be marginalized, having failed to move with the times. In a big shift to social media, we will be left behind. Practitioners will still be seen as 'fluffy.' There will not be enough quality among practitioners, who will not be interested enough in business and will have poor technical skills and writing ability. They will not have grasped their career opportunities, allow them to be grabbed by web and search engine optimization people. They will gain face time with clients. Companies will not invest in training their public relations staff.

Conclusions and recommendations:

1. Public relations should not be scared of innovation – should take control of this and experiment
2. It is up to us, as practitioners, to educate clients and others
3. There's a need to recruit business savvy people who know public relations and the importance of communication in business
4. Senior practitioners should be addressing business audiences, such as the CBI, Institute of Directors
5. There's a need to recruit graduates who take public relations and its scope seriously – public relations could be approached through articles, for graduates with general degrees (firsts, 'thinkers')
6. We should celebrate young people in practice
7. There is a need to re-examine and clarify the term public relations
8. We need to set measureable objectives (more numeracy)

CIPR Yorkshire and Lincolnshire 26 September 2011, 5pm to 8pm, Sheffield

For the group in Sheffield, a successful future for public relations practice to 2020 would involve:

- Increased CIPR membership (a larger percentage of practitioners in membership)
- An improved reputation for public relations -- not seen as spin
- Greater stakeholder engagement, with stakeholders seeing public relations as a crucial business tool
- Public relations receiving a greater share of the marketing mix spend
- Increased understanding of public relations
- More accurate measurement
- The practice being the first port of call for public relations methods
- Cutting edge use of new tools

- Competitive salaries, fees
- More gender balance
- Internationalization

Two smaller groups developed scenarios using three variables chosen from this longer list:

Group 1 examined:

- Increased CIPR membership (a larger percentage of practitioners in membership)
- Cutting edge use of new tools
- More gender balance

Group 2 examined:

- An improved reputation for public relations -- not seen as spin
- More gender balance
- More accurate measurement

Groups produced the following scenarios:

Group 1:

Most likely scenario

Looking at increased CIPR membership, cutting edge use of new tools and gender balance, the group felt that by 2020 it was likely recruitment will be affected by ongoing recession, and will remain at the same level, despite repackaging. The practice only keeps pace with technological developments but has pockets of expertise with early adopters. Recessionary factors continue -- the gender differential remains the same and priority is to protect jobs and income.

Best case scenario

In this, membership is repackaged and there is a significant increase in membership. CIPR leads the agenda in making use of new tools, and developers of new technology consult CIPR at R and D stage. CIPR leads, proactively campaigns to equalize pay levels, and actively encourages industry changes. Gender differential in pay levels decreases. CIPR puts its own house in order ('beacon').

Worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, membership falls significantly. PRCA membership, however, increases. There will be a 'confused' pool of potential members, not knowing who they should join. The practice 'backs the wrong technology horse' and fails to keep pace. Industry and developers look elsewhere (PRCA). Pay equity gets worse – men are paid more, and there are fewer women in the industry. Pay levels for women decrease further.

Group 2:

Most likely scenario

Examining public relations' reputation, gender and ethnic balance in the practice, and measurement, the group's most likely scenario for 2020 would see gains made by the industry to improve its reputation through effective operations. Managing reputation will continue to be a challenge, as social media take much of our power away. The years to 2020 will see a gradual change which starts to attract more people of different backgrounds, yet still doesn't represent and reflect society, and leaves public relations seen as an unattractive career option by some groups. By 2020, there will a more widely accepted system of measurement, but adoption of this will be patchy, dependent on budget and perceptions of public relations.

Best case scenario

In the best case scenario, the value of public relations will be understood by directors/senior managers. There will be an increased public profile for public relations, which will not be seen as 'just spin.' * A mandatory licence to practice will be accepted across the profession. A better gender/ethnic mix provides a richer culture for practitioners to operate in, and attracts a wider range of clients. The practice reflects the communities/society in which it operates. Measurement will be a universally adopted tool, built into every single campaign and piece of work. It will be an integrated and accepted part of public relations process and methodology.

Worst case scenario

In this, company bosses fail to see any value in public relations, and as the economic crisis deepens departments shut and agencies close. Technological advances make the industry redundant, and promotional activity is done by 'other means.' Public relations is seen as a stuffy, tired profession dominated by certain gender/ethnic groups in which it is impossible to attract people from other groups. The practice looks deeply unattractive to clients and potential recruits. In measurement, there are no tangible improvements from the current situation. There remain an over-reliance on AVEs and little acceptance of the value of public relations and its measurement.

Conclusions and recommendations:

- 1) There's a need to repackage payment for membership – according to income. There should also be more flexible arrangements for payment of membership fees, and differing rates for membership according to sectors.
- 2) There should research and investment in the development of new technology, in-house expertise (we know the tools, but can we invent them?)
- 3) CIPR should recognize and act on gender pay imbalance, and get its own house in order
- 4) There are needs for understanding of public relations, public relations for public relations, and new ways to communicate the value of public relations

CIPR North East 27 September 2011, 10am to 1pm, Newcastle

For the group in Newcastle, a successful future for public relations practice to 2020 would involve:

- Boardroom representation
- Greater proportion of practitioners in membership of CIPR
- Structured training in practice
- Membership recognized by employers
- Practice seen as honourable, not characterized by spin
- Greater understanding of what public relations is, and terminology of the practice
- Alignment with technology
- Public relations as the first stop for organizations wanting to manage reputation
- Public relations as definitely part of the marketing mix
- Consistency of the practice being recognized across the country
- Establishment of measures, and of cause and effect in practice
- Public relations being seen as an investment
- Investment in practice development
- A greater global vision

Two smaller groups developed scenarios using three variables chosen from this longer list:

Group 1 examined:

- Alignment with technology
- Practice seen as honourable, not characterized by spin
- Greater proportion of practitioners in membership of CIPR

Group 2 examined:

- Greater proportion of practitioners in membership of CIPR
- Public relations being seen as an investment
- Consistency of the practice across the country, in use of technology and training

Groups produced the following scenarios:

Group 1:

Most likely scenario

Looking at the practice's use of technology, whether or not the practice is seen as honourable, and encouraging a greater proportion of practitioners into membership of the CIPR, the group felt that by 2020 it was likely that the practice will have moved with technology. There will be a greater understanding of technology and public relations professionals will be more trained for use of technology. Clients will have embraced social media, and practitioners will be able to provide credible analysis and evaluation of the use of social media. Public relations' reputation will remain much the same. There will be average understanding of the industry on the part of business/organization leaders. Relationships with journalists and key opinion leaders/formers will remain variable. Within CIPR, a link between qualifications/standards and membership will be maintained. There will be a gentle increase in membership and attendance at training courses. Movement between public relations sectors will increase and increase understanding and respect between sectors.

Best case scenario

In this, there will be better client understanding of technology and client expectations will be more driven by social media. Practitioners will be using the right social media for each client as second nature, and will be shaping social media themselves. By 2020, there will be respect -- greater respect -- for the practice, which will be viewed as necessary business expenditure, and necessary to business planning and success. There will be obligatory CIPR membership for qualified professionals and professional standards. It will be seen as an honourable practice, and not as spin. Membership of CIPR will grow through greater recognition of the importance of public relations, and as employers understand the value of qualified practitioners (the 'Corgi' requirement). CIPR membership will be associated with positive values and meeting professional standards, and there will be recognition on the part of leaders and board members that CIPR membership is critical for recruitment. As in the most likely scenario, movement between public relations sectors will increase and increase understanding and respect between sectors.

Worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, public relations will not have embraced social media, understood it, incorporated its use as a marketing tool, or trained staff to respond according to positive/negative comments. In relations to social media, there will be a lack of cooperation and sharing of knowledge and experience, or identification of which platforms to use. Reputation of the practice will deteriorate, and public relations will be seen as irrelevant/a waste of money, lacking in credibility. It may be absorbed into other professions. Membership in CIPR will remain the same or drop, due to lack of value. Rival bodies may be seen as having more standing, offering membership at lower rates and cheaper training. Reputation may be weakened through financial instability, scandal or inappropriate behaviour. There will be a lack of understanding and respect between people within different sectors of public relations.

Group 2:

Most likely scenario

Looking at the CIPR achieving a greater proportion of practitioners in membership, public relations as an investment, and consistency in practice across the country in use of technology and training, the group felt that by 2020 it was likely that around 50% of the 61,700 in current practice could be CIPR members. However, membership can be like a leaking bucket as people join and leave as their careers develop. There are also variations in membership by region and specialization. By 2020, public relations may be seen as fragmented, as a cost rather than as an investment. There will remain limited understanding of what public relations is, blurring around campaign boundaries and attributing value to public relations. Public relations may be a source of competitive advantage, but there will remain pressure to demonstrate value for money, and pressure on budgets. In 2020, codes of practice will be referred to when things go wrong, but there will be slow take up of this, and indifference to them. The difficulty of disciplining non-members will remain. Training for consistency will have remained static, although there will be some opportunities for international benchmarking of practice.

Best case scenario

In this, by 2020, practitioners will have to have accreditation, which stamps the practitioner as professional. There will have been successful targeting of members aged 25 – 34, to ensure retention, and there will have been links established to student courses to build membership of 18 – 24 year-olds. Membership will be on the boardroom agenda. By 2020, there will be recognition that public relations is an investment, and it will be seen as adding to the bottom line as a business tool. There will be confidence that measurements are robust, and there will be approved on-line digital software to measure social/digital public relations. Public relations will be well-taught in universities, and public relations will lead the way in measuring reputation. By 2020, there will be widely understood standards, nationally and globally. There will be 'qualified' practitioners, creative competition, accepted client/practitioner relationships and on-going training. Recruitment agencies will have a clear agenda for recruitment to public relations practice.

Worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, the disappearance or collapse of CIPR is possible, through merger with other organizations such as the PRCA or CIM. Membership may decline, into an 'old school', aging membership. There may be no need for CIPR if other professional organizations train in public relations. There may be a continuing lack of understanding of the value and role of public relations. Members will need to feel and understand benefits of membership. Problems of measurement will continue – there will be no agreed/uniform metrics, and no investment in measurement, or in training for measurement. Other professional bodies will set benchmarks or metrics. There will be a lack of advancement in the public relations profession/CIPR and less commitment to evaluation. Other related industry special interests can hinder development, for example the NLA, as can costs.

Conclusions and recommendations:

- 1) There is a need for a drive to retain members aged 25 – 34, and to recruit more student members
- 2) There is a need to invest in professional education, and measurement
- 3) The code of practice should be promoted
- 4) Reputation is most worrying – the practice needs credibility, membership, accreditation (the 'Corgi' argument: homeowners look to plumbers who are 'Corgi' registered to install household boilers safely and reliably. Corgi registration is an assurance of quality. Only practitioners who are accredited should be provide advice and service to ensure quality of work)
- 5) CPD should be compulsory
- 6) It must be recognized that public relations goes beyond media relations – it is strategic, part of objective setting right at the outset in decision-making and planning
- 7) Public relations is more than the application of journalistic skills
- 8) What about 'over-qualified' practitioners – where are the roles for them?

CIPR Northern Ireland
24 October 2011, 10.30am to 1pm, Belfast

For the group in Belfast, a successful future for public relations practice to 2020 would involve:

- Meeting the demands of changing media
- Different skills in government relations, social media and writing
- A thriving, increasing membership for the CIPR
- A clearly defined career structure
- Increased understanding between practitioners working in the public and private sectors and movement between sectors
- Responsiveness to economic circumstances
- Clear reasons for, and benefits from, using public relations
- Being ready to capitalize on opportunities
- Quickness to respond, to offer services to clients and to set new developments
- Clear ethical lines
- New 'stereotypes' [of public relations practitioners]

Two smaller groups developed scenarios using three variables chosen from this longer list:

Group 1 combined two of the variables and examined:

- Responsiveness to economic circumstances
- Clear ethical lines and new 'stereotypes' [of public relations practitioners]
- Clear reasons for, and benefits from, using public relations

Group 2 examined:

- Meeting the demands of changing media
- Different skills in government relations, social media and writing
- Clear reasons for, and benefits from, using public relations

Groups produced the following scenarios:

Group 1:

Most likely scenario

Looking at responsiveness to economic circumstances, clear ethical lines and new stereotypes, and the reasons for and benefits from public relations, the group felt that by 2020 the economy would remain stagnant, and only the fittest would survive. New recruits to the practice will leave Northern Ireland, which will be over supplied with skills, but will offer fewer opportunities. In terms of developments in ethics and new examples for practice, there will be, in common with the worst case scenario, more of the same – more scandals relating to lobbying and more media exposes, damaging to public relations' reputation. Public relations will continue to be used as part of the marketing mix, and clients will demand 'more bang for their bucks.'

Best case scenario

In this, we will come out of recession. There will be a thriving private sector, in which the value of public relations will be realized. It will also be seen as more relevant in the public sector. Public relations will be better integrated into business models. Ethics will be clearly defined and publicized to external publics. There will be a code of practice applicable to all, and a uniform code of practice for all public relations practice. There will be a better understanding of public relations does and what it can achieve, enhancing its value. There will be better guidelines for lobbyists, in Northern Ireland Assembly and at Westminster. Public relations will tell a positive and creative story. It will be more widely used for economic reasons, providing better or best value. It will offer more opportunities to tell the whole story, and will have more credibility with media. Evaluation mechanisms will be strong and

show value of public relations and will need to be exploited. Public relations will be recognized as able to target with flexibility

Worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, the economy moves into double dip recession and dies, with job losses. Public relations is seen as a luxury, not a necessity. Red tape – regulations governing NIA, licences, music etc. – increases. Employment low, hampers growth, puts strain on small businesses – a big part of the Northern Ireland economy. The public relations industry fragments, with undercutting [in charges for services] and the rise of ‘one-man’ bands. In terms of developments in ethics and new examples for practice, there will be more of the same – more scandals relating to lobbying and more media exposes, damaging to public relations’ reputation, also seen as the most likely outcome. Clients and employers will stop using public relations, partly because public relations does not sell itself well enough and is linked to recession.

Group 2:

Most likely scenario

Looking at meeting the demands of changing media, the need for different skills, and clear reasons for using public relations and realizing its benefits, the group felt that by 2020 it was likely that public relations will have lagged behind new channel developments. The practice will be playing catch-up, but will be doing this slowly. Public relations organizations will begin to specialize – new agencies will form to meet specialist functions and will not be able to provide full service. The profession fails to grow, continuing in its old ways, under attack from advertising and marketing. Clients will move to social media for communication, and the profession will struggle to convince of the value of public relations.

Best case scenario

In this, by 2020, practitioners will be leading and developing new and better communications channels and tools, and new ways of using existing channels. The profession will have invested in skills training across the range of public relations and relevant skills, demonstrating the unique value and contribution of public relations. By 2020, more intelligible tools and techniques will have been developed to measure the specific impact of public relations activity and spend.

Worst case scenario

In the worst case scenario, the practice will have failed to embrace new opportunities, media channels and tools, but will be clinging to old habits and media. Practitioners will be overtaken by others, for example their clients, in the use of new media. Public relations will be seen as ineffective due to lack of expertise across disciplines, and will become marginalized, losing focus and spread too thinly. Public relations spend will wither away due to lack of demonstrable impact.

Conclusions and recommendations:

- 1) There should be collaboration with the IT industry to tap into skills and innovations that allow us to lead in the area of social media.
- 2) There should be more and better tool kits and greater awareness of those available.
- 3) There should be more awareness and circulation of case studies, illustrating best practice, innovations in the industry. Time to read should be built into the daily routine, training and personal development plans.
- 4) The CIPR should commission/develop new ways of measuring impact, and should take responsibility for getting key industry players together to inform and shape these. We need to clarify measurement and evaluation to demonstrate real value
- 5) Public relations for public relations should be improved.
- 6) We need to lobby against red tape/unnecessary legislation.
- 7) CIPR could lead raising standards across the industry – anyone practicing public relations should/must be a CIPR member. Costs of membership should be reviewed.

APPENDIX IV

PR2020 -- A Successful Practice

Themes

A general understanding of what public relations is, and is to achieve

A general understanding of what public relations is, and is to achieve; greater understanding of public relations – it should be seen as more than ‘window dressing’ or something anyone can do; public relations being seen as business-critical; the practice being seen as communication, rather than spin; definition of public relations as a business and a clear perception of what the practice involves; greater public understanding of what public relations involves; being strategic, rather than tactical; a clear definition of the practice, which would be clearly understood; transparency (in what we do, and how we add value); a practice in which spin would be behind us; a practice moving towards Grunig’s fourth model (of two-way, symmetrical communication); common agreement on definitions of the practice; public relations as a term surviving, or changing; clarification of areas of practice; being more than media relations; increased scope; greater stakeholder engagement, with stakeholders seeing public relations as a crucial business tool; increased understanding of public relations; greater understanding of what public relations is, and terminology of the practice; clear reasons for, and benefits from, using public relations; an understanding of the ethical framework for the practice, on the part of practitioners and the public; clear ethical lines.

Skillful practitioners

Skillful practitioners; well trained practitioners; qualified, professionally recognized staff; no amateurs; better resources, time for education; an ability to attract the best recruits; optimum digital capability; all practitioners being good communicators; an ability to engage with many stakeholders; a practice in which practitioners showed improved awareness of public relations as a profession; practitioners who are more ‘ambidextrous’ of mind; a practice in which the role of the practitioner grows, in which agencies die, and there develop two streams – in-house and consultancies; opportunities to meet need for senior management development; identifiable streams of practice, in-house and in consultancies; more specialization; standards of professionalism; practitioners able to immerse themselves in industry they are working in (for example, pharmaceuticals); a more experienced, older workforce; dealing with more audiences; high quality practitioners; increased, higher skill levels; different skills in government relations, social media and writing; increased understanding between practitioners working in the public and private sectors and movement between sectors.

Strength of the practice

A practice accepted like others, such as accounting; having professional status (like a GP); having professional status (like a GP) (mentioned by two groups); strong leadership from professional bodies; a professional research culture; better research; a practice led by a strong professional body; strength and confidence; a stronger practice; accredited practice; transparency; a practice that incorporates practitioners now working under other labels, such as activists; the CIPR and PRCA recognized and signed up to; a practice that is vibrant, relevant and meaningful; meeting challenges and flourishing; increased CIPR membership (a larger percentage of practitioners in membership); greater proportion of practitioners in membership of CIPR; membership recognized by employers; consistency of the practice being recognized across the country; a thriving, increasing membership for the CIPR.

Practice at the cutting edge: creativity and innovation

Use of technology; practice at the cutting edge; a break away from “still shoving out press releases;” integration and management of all channels; innovation and creativity; keeping pace with developments, in the media and technology, and demonstrated adaptability; innovation; an ability to be contradictory, to find other ways of doing things; a creative practice; making highly integrated use of media and showing flexibility in application of media; a practice that had embraced changes in technology; cutting edge use of new tools; the practice being the first port of call for public relations

methods; alignment with technology; public relations as the first stop for organizations wanting to manage reputation; investment in practice development; quickness to respond, to offer services to clients and to set new developments

Profitable, viable business activities

The practice moving on from being the first target for cuts; profitable, viable business activities; profitability and financial growth; fighting off clients, a lucrative practice; a £10bn business; more profit-sharing and cooperative working; a practice that is well rewarded; profitable; continuing growth; financial success; profitable business performance; 'decent' budgets; a practice that makes its participants 'rich, happy and famous;' delivering business benefit, real business impact, service into business; a practice that is not an 'add on' or 'nice to have;' competitive salaries, fees; public relations being seen as an investment; responsiveness to economic circumstances; being ready to capitalize on opportunities

Measurement and evaluation: the benefits of practice

Clearer understanding of evaluation; a better idea of impact; better measures of the practice; sophisticated measurement; demonstrable cost-effectiveness; tangible results; a practice able to point to its beneficial results; an ability to show the impact of practice; proven social value; the practice being seen as adding value; the practice seen as essential to democracy; establishment of the value of reputation; better evaluation (better measurement); accepted measurement; recognized formal evaluation (especially of digital practice); a more coherent measurement framework; more accurate measurement; establishment of measures, and of cause and effect in practice.

Respect

A practice that is respected; a valued practice; a better reputation for the practice; more recognition as a profession; public relations will be seen as a valued profession; a practice that is trusted, respected and well regulated; a good reputation for the practice; respect; recognition as a profession; trust; respect; trust; a practice viewed as authoritative and expert; an accredited practice; a practice needing qualifications and experience; a trusted practice; an improved reputation for public relations -- not seen as spin; practice seen as honourable, not characterized by spin.

Relationship to senior management

A practice from which more CEOs could come; public relations skills being shared, expected of CEOs, with practitioners acting as advisors; buy-in from senior management; public relations will be at the heart of decision-making (with a seat on the board); presence in the board room; public relations being seen as a boardroom function; a strategic role; board representation; board level buy-in; a practice taken seriously – and ideally represented – at board level; strategic contribution; senior people 'getting it;' boardroom representation.

Separate existence

A separate existence for public relations, in which the practice is not subsumed under some other practice; a resolved relationship with advertising and marketing; not just serving as a marketing function.

or

Better integration with other areas of marketing

Better integration with other areas of marketing; the practice becoming "king of the marketing mix;" public relations at the centre of marketing communications; public relations receiving a greater share of the marketing mix spend; public relations as definitely part of the marketing mix;

Diversity

A practice that is accessible to most; diversity, a move away from London-centric approaches towards more globalised approaches to the practice; a diverse workforce; change in the practice to reflect changes in the wider culture; diversity and inclusion; diversity (reflecting society); a practice which reflects the wider society (not over-educated); more gender balance; internationalization; a greater global vision.

Employment and career opportunities

Full employment and career opportunities; a practice that is a real career choice, not one that people fall into; public relations being seen as an attractive career prospect; public relations being seen as an attractive career; clear entry standards; developed CIPR qualifications; structured training in practice; a clearly defined career structure.

Standards of practice

Higher and required standards of practice; a form of 'chartered status' for junior staff; high standards of practice; standardization across the board (to include measures of the practice).

Closer collaboration with other areas of management, such as human resources

Closer collaboration with other areas of management, such as human resources; integration; integration; a practice that encroaches on customer relations, and all aspects of a business.

Positive role models for the practice

Positive role models for the practice; a practice not represented by Max Clifford, parties or Ab Fab imagery; new 'stereotypes' [of public relations practitioners].

A healthy, successful media sector

A healthy, successful media sector; better media relations; meeting the demands of changing media.

Relevance

Relevance; relevance (mentioned by two groups).

APPENDIX V

Scenarios: Topics Chosen for Discussion in Smaller Groups

CIPR Wessex, Bournemouth

Group 1 examined:

- Diversity, a move away from London-centric approaches towards more globalised approaches to the practice
- A practice accepted like others, such as accounting, (combining this with a practice that is respected)
- A practice that is accessible to most

Group 2 examined:

- Tangible results
- A practice that is respected
- Diversity, a move away from London-centric approaches towards more globalised approaches to the practice

CIPR Scotland, Aberdeen

Group 1 examined:

- Better reputation, running this together with recognition of public relations as a profession
- Better measurement of the practice, linking this with impact (performance metrics)
- Better integration with other areas of marketing

Group 2 examined:

- Practice at the 'cutting edge'
- Better measures of the practice
- A better reputation for the practice

CIPR Scotland, Glasgow

Group 1 examined:

- Skillful practitioners
- Greater understanding of public relations – it should be seen as more than 'window dressing' or something anyone can do
- A healthy, successful media sector

Group 2 examined:

- Higher and required standards of practice, combining this with opportunities for training
- Buy-in from senior management, combining this with understanding of public relations
- A healthy, successful media sector

CIPR Scotland, Edinburgh

Group 1 examined:

- Public relations being seen as business-critical
- High standards of practice
- Innovation and creativity

Group 2 examined:

- Demonstrable cost-effectiveness
- Sophisticated measurement
- Public relations will be at the heart of decision-making (with a seat on the board)

CIPR Cymru Cardiff

Group 1 examined:

- Keeping pace with developments, in the media and technology, and demonstrated adaptability
- The practice being seen as adding value
- The practice seen as essential to democracy

Group 2 examined:

- Keeping pace with developments, in the media and technology, and demonstrated adaptability
- Profitability and financial growth
- Public relations skills being shared, expected of CEOs, with practitioners acting as advisors

CIPR East Anglia, Norwich

Group 1 examined:

- Reputation/ Recognition as a profession
- Better evaluation (better measurement)
- Innovation

Group 2 examined:

- Being strategic, rather than tactical
- Recognition as a profession
- Evaluation

Special Interest Groups, London

Group 1 examined:

- Respect
- In discussion, the group decided that it was important to consider the characteristics of the ideal public relations practitioner for 2020
- Integration

Group 2 examined:

- Respect
- The profitability of the practice
- A clear definition of the practice, which would be clearly understood

CIPR Greater London 1

Group 1 examined:

- Having professional status (like a GP)
- Highly integrated use of media
- Accepted measurement

Group 2 examined:

- Diversity (reflecting society)
- Having professional (and trusted) status (like a GP)
Relevance

CIPR Midlands, Birmingham

Group 1 examined:

- Optimum digital capability
- Profitable business performance
- Recognized formal evaluation (especially of digital practice)

Group 2 examined:

- All practitioners being good communicators
- Recognized formal evaluation (especially of digital practice)
- Better media relations

CIPR Greater London 2

Group 1 examined:

- A practice in which practitioners showed improved awareness of public relations as a profession
- Practitioners who are more 'ambidextrous' of mind
- A practice in which the role of the practitioner grows, in which agencies die, and there develop two streams of practice – in-house and consultancies

Group 2 examined:

- Practitioners who are more 'ambidextrous' of mind
- A more coherent measurement framework
- A practice which reflects the wider society

CIPR West of England, Bristol

Group 1 examined:

- A practice taken seriously – and ideally represented – at board level
- Public relations at the centre of marketing communications
- Identifiable streams of practice, in-house and in consultancies

Group 2 examined:

- Standards of professionalism
- Practitioners able to immerse themselves in industry they are working in (for example, pharmaceuticals)
- A more experienced, older workforce

CIPR North West, Manchester

Group 1 examined:

- Being more than media relations
- Strategic contribution
- Delivering business benefit, real business impact, service into business

Group 2 examined:

- Not just serving as a marketing function
- Being more than media relations
- High quality practitioners

CIPR Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, Sheffield

Group 1 examined:

- Increased CIPR membership (a larger percentage of practitioners in membership)
- Cutting edge use of new tools
- More gender balance

Group 2 examined:

- An improved reputation for public relations -- not seen as spin
- More gender balance
- More accurate measurement

CIPR North East, Newcastle

Group 1 examined:

- Alignment with technology
- Practice seen as honourable, not characterized by spin
- Greater proportion of practitioners in membership of CIPR

Group 2 examined:

- Greater proportion of practitioners in membership of CIPR
- Public relations being seen as an investment
- Consistency of the practice across the country, in use of technology and training

CIPR Northern Ireland, Belfast

Group 1 combined two of the variables and examined:

- Responsiveness to economic circumstances
- Clear ethical lines and new 'stereotypes' [of public relations practitioners]
- Clear reasons for, and benefits from, using public relations

Group 2 examined:

- Meeting the demands of changing media
- Different skills in government relations, social media and writing
- Clear reasons for, and benefits from, using public relations

Master list of topics used in scenario development

- Better reputation; recognition of public relations as a profession; an improved reputation for public relations -- not seen as spin; a practice respected and accepted like others, such as accounting; practice seen as honourable, not characterized by spin (chosen by 11 of the smaller groups)
- Better and accepted measurement of the practice, linking this with impact (performance metrics); a more coherent measurement framework; more accurate measurement (chosen by 5 groups)
- Better evaluation; recognized formal evaluation (especially of digital practice) (chosen by 4 groups)
- Diversity, a move away from London-centric approaches towards more globalised approaches to the practice; diversity (reflecting society); a practice which reflects the wider society (chosen by 4 groups)
- Increased CIPR membership (a larger percentage of practitioners in membership); greater proportion of practitioners in membership of CIPR (chosen by 3 groups)
- Profitability and financial growth (chosen by 3 groups)
- Public relations being seen as business-critical; delivering business benefit, real business impact, service into business (chosen by 2 groups)
- The characteristics of the ideal public relations practitioner for 2020; high quality practitioners (chosen by 2 groups)
- More gender balance (chosen by 2 groups)
- Public relations will be at the heart of decision-making (with a seat on the board); a practice taken seriously – and ideally represented – at board level (chosen by 2 groups)
- Greater understanding of public relations – it should be seen as more than ‘window dressing’ or something anyone can do (chosen by 2 groups)
- Having professional status (like a GP) (chosen by 2 groups)
- Keeping pace with developments, in the media and technology, and demonstrated adaptability (chosen by 2 groups)
- Optimum digital capability; alignment with technology (chosen by 2 groups)
- Practitioners who are more ‘ambidextrous’ of mind (chosen by 2 groups)
- Being more than media relations (chosen by 2 groups)
- A healthy, successful media sector (chosen by 2 groups)
- A practice that is accessible to most
- Tangible results
- Better integration with other areas of marketing
- Practice at the ‘cutting edge’
- Skillful practitioners
- Higher and required standards of practice, combining this with opportunities for training
- Buy-in from senior management
- High standards of practice
- Innovation and creativity
- Demonstrable cost-effectiveness
- Sophisticated measurement
- The practice being seen as adding value
- The practice seen as essential to democracy
- Public relations skills being shared, expected of CEOs, with practitioners acting as advisors
- Innovation
- Being strategic, rather than tactical
- Integration
- A clear definition of the practice, which would be clearly understood
- Highly integrated use of media
- Relevance
- All practitioners being good communicators
- Better media relations
- A practice in which practitioners showed improved awareness of public relations as a profession

- A practice in which the role of the practitioner grows, in which agencies die, and there develop two streams of practice – in-house and consultancies
- Public relations at the centre of marketing communications
- Identifiable streams of practice, in-house and in consultancies
- Standards of professionalism
- Practitioners able to immerse themselves in industry they are working in (for example, pharmaceuticals)
- A more experienced, older workforce
- Strategic contribution
- Not just serving as a marketing function
- Cutting edge use of new tools
- Public relations being seen as an investment
- Consistency of the practice across the country, in use of technology and training
- Responsiveness to economic circumstances
- Clear ethical lines and new ‘ stereotypes’ [of public relations practitioners]
- Clear reasons for, and benefits from, using public relations
- Meeting the demands of changing media
- Different skills in government relations, social media and writing
- Clear reasons for, and benefits from, using public relations

APPENDIX VI

Most Likely, Best Case and Worst Case Scenarios

Most likely scenarios

CIPR Wessex Bournemouth

Most likely scenario (1)

Between now and 2020, there will be significant growth in numbers of practitioners with modest progress on questions of diversity, against a background of an increase in communication practice. The increasing role of digital information will create barriers for some. There will remain confusion about the direction of practice, based on unclear definitions of what public relations practice is and is to achieve, as citizen control over communications increases.

Most likely scenario(2)

Looking forward to 2020, the most likely scenario sees public relations in danger of splitting. Part of the problem here is that there is lack of understanding of public relations and what it can achieve in terms of tangible results. The practice may split into activities fitting best into strategic management consultancy, and other activities dealing mainly with tactical public relations and publicity. It will continue as now, misunderstood and not respected as a practice. It will be able to draw on a larger talent pool, and this should allow for increased diversity in the practice, but this will be a creeping, 'safe' diversity, based on compromises.

CIPR Scotland, Aberdeen

Most likely scenario (1)

To 2020, public relations' reputation will remain much the same and little progress will be made towards developing better measures of the practice. This will have the potential to damage the reputation of the practice further. Public relations will continue to be seen as a separate, additional practice, rather than one integrated with areas of marketing.

Most likely scenario(2)

Towards 2020, the practice will be using new technological possibilities wisely, remaining slightly behind the cutting edge, watching developments, researching their use and waiting to see how developments can be best used. Approaches to evaluation will be half-hearted, and attitudes to evaluation ambiguous, partly because of a lack of understanding of how public relations contributes to business and organizational performance. Developing a better reputation for the practice will continue to be a battle and reputation will move up and down. Change in reputation will be limited and it will be difficult for individuals to influence reputation.

CIPR Scotland, Glasgow

Most likely scenario(1)

The impact of the number of people joining public relations practice will force the development of standards. There will be a need for full collaboration of industry bodies such as CIPR and PRCA to ensure proper integration of digital and social media into the practice. The definition of what it means to be a chartered practitioner will need to change to incorporate issues raised by the current controversy over media and organization relationships revealed by the controversy around The News of the World and journalistic practices. The CIPR will need to encourage the development of the practice by reducing costs relating to training and chartered practitioner status.

Current – 2011 – scandals may possibly add to the lack of trust in public relations. There will be more pressure for evaluation and analysis of public relations (not monetary analysis). The definition of

public relations will have to become more precise to incorporate public affairs, social media, roles involved in public relations, and what it means. Public relations is more and more discussed in the media, and names of practitioners will become better known.

In the media sector, there will be more engagement with the media as an outcome of current issues. There will be changes in the media landscape and there will be more collaboration with the media, beyond simple contact or antagonism. The media will redefine themselves, their role, and will consolidate.

Most likely scenario (2)

Towards 2020, more importance will be placed on the standards – in behavior, ethics and competence – of public relations practitioners by the organizations they work for, and practitioners will be expected to undertake continuing professional development to meet required standards. There will be more buy-in to, and realization of, the importance of public relations by senior management. There will also be greater realization of that reputation management is important. Social media will grow, creating more reputational risk for organizations, partly because social media will be unregulated.

CIPR Scotland, Edinburgh

Most likely scenario (1)

By 2020, the CIPR will continue to be a respected body and the profession will still be seen as making a valued contribution, particularly to the bottom line. Public relations will demonstrate value at every level, because of its role in events, which unfold 24/7. It will retain the capacity to act as the social conscience of organizations. Public relations practitioners will be innovators, driven, and ahead of the game. There will be more CIPR accredited practitioners, more formal qualifications and more opportunities for on-line learning and the sharing of best practice. Practitioners will be better able to use/exploit and keep on top of new communication channels. There will be expectations that public relations is more of a science than an art, backed up by measurement. Training and learning encourage practitioners to come up with creative solutions. The practice will involve more talking directly to the public in creative ways. More practitioners will have a seat on the board.

Most likely scenario(2)

Looking at cost effectiveness, measurement questions and whether or not public relations will be at the heart of decision-making going forward to 2020, it is most likely that the practice will have to work harder to maintain budgets, and will have to do more with less, relying on greater creativity to do this. Budgets will continue to have an impact on evaluation, and there will be pressures to find free evaluation tools. Practitioners will be involved in a constant struggle to get their voices heard at the highest levels of decision-making.

CIPR Cymru, Cardiff

Most likely scenario (1)

Examining the ability of the practice to keep pace with developments, to demonstrate added value and contribute to democracy, the group suggested that by 2020 the practice is most likely to keep pace with developments, but there will be a blurring of boundaries in communication. There may be a weakening of perceptions that the public relations discipline is needed, that middlemen need to be cut out. In Wales, there are good perceptions of public relations' value in reaching communities, but in the UK as a whole the success of practice will depend on ability to demonstrate how the practice should be evaluated. Public relations will continue to debate how it demonstrates value as the communication context continues to change. The practice's contribution to the workings of democracy will be clearer in Wales, where there is less cynicism, the practice is more community-based and government is achieving more respect. In the UK generally, there is growing cynicism and perception that the public are misled and excluded. This will lead to a growth of alternative sources of, and channels for, information.

Most likely scenario (2)

Looking at the practice keeping pace with developments, its profitability and the extent to which public relations skills will be shared going forward to 2020, the practice will see further decline in the print media, advancement of social media and a younger generation coming through, requiring constant re-education. Who will be in charge of this? Will practitioners become jacks of all trades? By 2020, competence in the use of social media will be up across the board, and there will be competition with complementary agencies using the same technologies to reach audiences and tell stories. With fewer traditional outlets increasing amounts of time will be spent on new outlets. Competencies will be up but companies and clients will have to put more focus on re-education to stay ahead. It's possible that public relations agencies will no longer be called public relations agencies. There is still a fight between advertising, marketing and communications agencies over who owns digital communication.

Public relations will realize new revenue streams, but old revenue streams will still be going. Public relations may get a share of falling advertising revenues. By 2020, the recovery will be up, so profits will also hopefully be up, but these will be shared due to a proliferation of agencies (by 2020, there will have been an increase in digital specialists, with fewer new entrants to the market). We'll see globalization of media and skills, and could see practitioners across the globe competing, with adverse effects on profitability.

There will be increased awareness of the importance of public relations at board level, and our skills in public relations will be integrated into business objectives. There will still be some scepticism towards public relations. By 2020, awareness of public relations and digital communication will mean that some SME bosses will consider themselves sufficiently skilled in communication.

CIPR East Anglia, Norwich

Most likely scenario (1)

Examining whether or not that practice will be viewed as professional, evaluation and innovation, the group suggested that by 2020 the practice is most likely to remain static, taking no risks and opting for safety. It will be made up of 'yes people' and possibly subject to statutory regulation. Approaches to evaluation will stay the same, there will be no guidelines to follow, and evaluation will still be a 'guessing game.' In terms of the practice's ability to innovate and change, there will be a failure to see opportunities, for example to incorporate social media. We will continue to be reactive, not proactive, a minor voice in the industry and will continue to fail to recognize and audit issues.

Most likely scenario (2)

Looking at the practice as strategic, professional and as one making use of evaluation going forward to 2020, the practice will provide advice at board level, but will still be largely tactical, drawing on a mix of technical and managerial skills. It will be better planned and able to draw on some budgetary resources. It will show increasing professionalism, with more employers funding opportunities for practitioner skill development and general development. Qualifications in public relations will be promoted to HR and employers. By 2020, the practice will have developed better evaluation tools and thinking and will be use of a better mix of quantitative and qualitative evaluation.

CIPR Special Interest Groups, London

Most likely scenario (1)

Examining the respect given to the practice, characteristics of the ideal practitioner and the degree of integration of the practice with other disciplines, the group suggested that by 2020 the practice will remain fuzzy, perceived as an element in marketing. There will be a general lack of understanding of the practice and a need to monitor standards. There will not be enough high level practitioners – the status quo remains, but new blood will be raising the bar. By 2020, there will still be a fight towards integrated communication, involving a number of bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Marketing, PRCA and CIPR.

Most likely scenario (2)

Looking at the respect given to the practice, its profitability and the extent to which the practice is clearly defined and understood, the group suggested that by 2020 the practice is most likely to see little change in the amount of respect accorded the practice, which is relatively low. Perceptions of the practice will be driven by media portrayal of the practice (as in Ab Fab, The Thick of It etc). Many do not see it as a profession and some in practice are committed to CPD. There will still be confusion on how we measure profitability and economic value of the practice, and we will see a gradual consolidation of public relations agencies. Public relations will still and often be misunderstood, and the public will have a narrow perception of the practice. There will be a lack of awareness of the different disciplines and breadth of the practice, with grey areas between public relations and reputation/marketing/ advertising/policy/(social media??)

CIPR Greater London group, London

Most likely scenario (1)

Examining the professional status of the practice, integrated use of media and accepted measurement, the group suggested that by 2020 the practice will be likely to require global, international mobility and increased appreciation of ethical standards. There will be a universal acceptance of the need for professional status based on accreditation, which will aid career advancement. Use of media will be subject to regulation and will remain siloed, with – as currently – recruitment bringing in specialists in the use of particular media. By 2020, measurement will focus on a mixture of output and outcome measures, used a kind of 'morphed' AVEs, and there will be improved technology metrics.

Most likely scenario (2)

Looking at the diversity of the practice, its professional status, and whether or not the practice will still be relevant in 2020, the group suggested there is likely to be a small increase in diversity (which involves greater diversity in terms of ethnic backgrounds, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, and social background). More women will be setting up their own agencies, but for women certain sectors, such as the City, will remain difficult to penetrate. There will be more women on boards, and more apprenticeship schemes because of higher university fees. There will be little change in the age composition of the practice, but a small increase in the number of disabled people in the practice thanks to home working etc. By 2020, the picture on professional status will remain mixed, with Max Clifford versus practitioners as strategic advisors. The practice will be driven by changes in technology and will not be reacting fast enough.

CIPR Midlands group, Birmingham

Most likely scenario (1)

Examining the digital capability of the practice, its profitability and the development of approaches to evaluation, the group suggested that by 2020 the practice will see a growth of specialism (so for example in account teams there will be specialists in social media, account management and media relations). Digital practice will bridge the gap between communications and marketing, making use of advanced technology. There will be more regulation of the practice in a busy marketplace, and it will be hard to stand out in the crowd. There will be brand apathy. It will be a time of tight budgets and big expectations, but the practice will have increased credibility. The economy will still be tough, the recession will remain and conditions will be challenging. Budgets will have to work harder, but public relations is cheaper than advertising and better value. There will be a reallocation of budgets to public relations. There will be a drive to reduce over-servicing internally for agencies, and opportunities to develop new skills and segments. Evaluation will have evolved and improved – improvements will be small, but there will be no Holy Grail. We will have lost public relations value/AVE calculations, and will be looking at how public relations affects sales/footfall, website hits rather than circulations, and at spikes in interaction, footfall and sales. There will be greater awareness of the importance of evaluation and a focus on it, as well as a focus on behaviour changes and statistics to provide evidence of it.

Most likely scenario (2)

Looking at practitioners' communication skills, evaluation and developments in media relations, the group suggested that by 2020 there will be fewer graduates coming into the practice (there will be fewer graduates because of rising tuition fees). Experience will outweigh academic qualifications. There will be more social media channels. Practitioners will remain generalists rather than specialists, who will need to maintain writing skills and be involved in continuous development. We will need to convince at board level, but the goalposts will keep moving because of changes in the industry. Practitioners will understand the value of metrics and will be able to explain them to clients. Qualitative measures will exist alongside quantitative measures. Lip service will be paid to the Barcelona Principles. Clients will continue not to want to pay for evaluation. In the media by 2020, there will be more 'churnalism' but the public will be more media savvy and able to spot public relations. There will be more bloggers and use of multiple media channels. At the same time, there will be more use of tailored approaches to get coverage, and establish one-to-one communication.

CIPR Greater London (second group)

Most likely scenario (1)

Considering improved awareness of the profession on the part of practitioners, critical ('ambidextrous') thinking and the growing role of the practitioner, the group said that by 2020 it was likely that there will be some improvement of awareness as the current generation of practitioners grow older. Non-members of CIPR and unqualified individuals will still be able to practice, but there will be gradual improvement in the profession. There will be improvement in thinking, but it will not be greatly different. There will be more strategic input, but at current proportions. Looking at the role of the practitioner, the term public relations dies off as a recognized term. Craft skills are provided and bought by other sectors, such as marketing and law. The most likely development here is also seen as the worst case development.

Most likely scenario (2)

Looking at capabilities for thinking in the practice, a coherent framework for measurement and whether or not the practice will reflect the diversity of the wider society (gender, race, religion, age and socio-economic background), the group thought it most likely that by 2020 there will be no change in capabilities, recruitment and training. But there will be a shortfall, as there is more need for critical thinking. By 2020, AVEs will be dead, and the majority of programmes will involve some measurement. There will be some improvement in diversity.

CIPR West of England, Bristol

Most likely scenario (1)

Examining the possibilities of public relations being taken seriously at board level, occupying a place at the centre of marketing communications and dividing into streams of practice, the group felt that by 2020 it was likely that there will be polarization. Those that 'get' public relations will continue to embrace the benefits and will be successful, while those that don't will revert to use of a simple information function (the press officer). By 2020, agencies will either be integrated or will have evolved into specialisms. There will be a continuation of current practice, with the growth of generalists and hyper specialists, working through small boutique agencies.

Most likely scenario(2)

Looking at whether or not the practice will be taken seriously at board level, whether or not public relations will have a place at the centre of marketing communications, and will divide into streams of practice, the group thought it most likely that by 2020 there will be little change from 2011. Public relations will still be seen as 'nice to have.' There will be best practice in some areas but no real across the board standards. Similarly, there will be pockets of best practice when it comes to

immersion in particular industries, but immersion will often be the result of last minute swotting. As it is now, talent and experience is lost at certain life stages and due to the pressures of the profession.

CIPR North West, Manchester

Most likely scenario (1)

Examining whether or not public relations is more than media relations, able to make a strategic contribution and deliver business benefit, the group said that by 2020 the practice is likely to work with other audiences, as clients accept these and the importance of social media. The practice will be working with the same tools and a few new ones, with the same tactics. There will be a need for different campaigns and thought processes for social media audiences. Through social media, there is a conversation happening but it's unclear who is to deal with this – customer services, public relations or advertising. Some companies still don't have understanding of the importance of strategy in public relations. Lower budgets focus businesses on strategy rather than creative campaigns, and there is a need for more collaboration between different media spaces. There will be demands for proof – in financial terms – of campaign effectiveness (sales, footfall etc), and for instant results and reporting. Business impact will become the focus of campaigns and KPIs.

Most likely scenario (2)

Considering whether or not public relations would be seen as more than a marketing function, would deal with audiences other than the media, and the quality of public relations practitioners, the group felt that by 2020 it was likely that there would be pockets of those who 'get it' [public relations and its role]. Digital developments will have a positive impact on purchase of public relations services. Public relations will stay as a marketing tool and consolidate with social media and search engine optimization specialists. It will remain rooted in press releases, but there will be emphases on good content and creativity. The practice will continue to liaise with journalists, as business will still be nervous of the power of the media over reputation building. There will probably be more listening to general conversation. Public relations will still own the territory of media relations. Practitioners will make inroads strategically. There will be more vocational degrees. Entry will still be very competitive, and there will remain a lack of understanding of public relations' role in business.

CIPR Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, Sheffield

Most likely scenario (1)

Looking at increased CIPR membership, cutting edge use of new tools and gender balance, the group felt that by 2020 it was likely recruitment will be affected by ongoing recession, and will remain at the same level, despite repackaging. The practice only keeps pace with technological developments but has pockets of expertise with early adopters. Recessionary factors continue -- the gender differential remains the same and priority is to protect jobs and income.

Most likely scenario (2)

Examining public relations' reputation, gender and ethnic balance in the practice, and measurement, the group's most likely scenario for 2020 would see gains made by the industry to improve its reputation through effective operations. Managing reputation will continue to be a challenge, as social media take much of our power away. The years to 2020 will see a gradual change which starts to attract more people of different backgrounds, yet still doesn't represent and reflect society, and leaves public relations seen as an unattractive career option by some groups. By 2020, there will a more widely accepted system of measurement, but adoption of this will be patchy, dependent on budget and perceptions of public relations.

CIPR North East, Newcastle

Most likely scenario (1)

Looking at the practice's use of technology, whether or not the practice is seen as honourable, and encouraging a greater proportion of practitioners into membership of the CIPR, the group felt that by 2020 it was likely that the practice will have moved with technology. There will be a greater understanding of technology and public relations professionals will be more trained for use of technology. Clients will have embraced social media, and practitioners will be able to provide credible analysis and evaluation of the use of social media. Public relations' reputation will remain much the same. There will be average understanding of the industry on the part of business/organization leaders. Relationships with journalists and key opinion leaders/formers will remain variable. Within CIPR, a link between qualifications/standards and membership will be maintained. There will be a gentle increase in membership and attendance at training courses. Movement between public relations sectors will increase and increase understanding and respect between sectors.

Most likely scenario (2)

Looking at the CIPR achieving a greater proportion of practitioners in membership, public relations as an investment, and consistency in practice across the country in use of technology and training, the group felt that by 2020 it was likely that around 50% of the 61,700 in current practice could be CIPR members. However, membership can be like a leaking bucket as people join and leave as their careers develop. There are also variations in membership by region and specialization. By 2020, public relations may be seen as fragmented, as a cost rather than as an investment. There will remain limited understanding of what public relations is, blurring around campaign boundaries and attributing value to public relations. Public relations may be a source of competitive advantage, but there will remain pressure to demonstrate value for money, and pressure on budgets. In 2020, codes of practice will be referred to when things go wrong, but there will be slow take up of this, and indifference to them. The difficulty of disciplining non-members will remain. Training for consistency will have remained static, although there will be some opportunities for international benchmarking of practice.

CIPR Northern Ireland, Belfast

Most likely scenario (1)

Looking at responsiveness to economic circumstances, clear ethical lines and new stereotypes, and the reasons for and benefits from public relations, the group felt that by 2020 the economy would remain stagnant, and only the fittest would survive. New recruits to the practice will leave Northern Ireland, which will be over supplied with skills, but will offer fewer opportunities. In terms of developments in ethics and new examples for practice, there will be, in common with the worst case scenario, more of the same – more scandals relating to lobbying and more media exposes, damaging to public relations' reputation. Public relations will continue to be used as part of the marketing mix, and clients will demand 'more bang for their bucks.'

Most likely scenario (2)

Looking at meeting the demands of changing media, the need for different skills, and clear reasons for using public relations and realizing its benefits, the group felt that by 2020 it was likely that public relations will have lagged behind new channel developments. The practice will be playing catch-up, but will be doing this slowly. Public relations organizations will begin to specialize – new agencies will form to meet specialist functions and will not be able to provide full service. The profession fails to grow, continuing in its old ways, under attack from advertising and marketing. Clients will move to social media for communication, and the profession will struggle to convince of the value of public relations.

Best case scenarios

CIPR Wessex, Bournemouth

Best case scenario (1)

The years to 2020 will see general understanding and acceptance of public relations develop, and the best people from all backgrounds will rise to the top of the practice. Public relations will support democracy by empowering people to communicate freely and transparently. Technical barriers to communication will be swept away.

Best case scenario(2)

In the best case scenario, public relations will be confident in what it can produce and will be driving the development of the market for public relations services, rather than simply responding to client demands. It will be integrated with other areas of management, and will be seen as indispensable and respected accordingly. It will be a diverse practice, representative of the wider population and wider interests.

CIPR Scotland, Aberdeen

Best case scenario(1)

The best case scenario would see the practice develop a clear definition of itself which would achieve buy-in from the industry. The practice would move away from a preoccupation with measurement metrics and begin to manage the expectations that others have for measurement of the practice. Practitioners will pool resources with others providing advice on marketing and organization tasks and work cooperatively.

Best case scenario(2)

In the best case scenario, the practice will be seen as leading, breaking through boundaries, pioneering the use of new tools, integrating these into practice, and demonstrating adaptability. The value and importance of public relations will be recognized, and the practice will be seen as proficient in the use of methods available to it. Approaches to measurement will be standardized in the UK, leading to improved standards in practice. Public relations will have shed its current image and be respected and held in high regard, among clients (internal and external) and the public. Its worth will be demonstrated through more effective measurement, and it will have moved to the top of the agenda. It will have moved from 'Voldemort to Gandalf' – no longer a powerful black art but a force for good. The media will have been educated to the potential of its role, particularly in demonstrating corporate social responsibility.

CIPR Scotland, Glasgow

Best case scenario(1)

The best case scenario sees practitioners buying into the idea of developing their skills and taking the initiative to do this. Efforts here will need to start in the schools, where public relations can be offered as a career option. Emphasis on skills in practice will help public relations' credibility and may possibly lead on to more public relations employment opportunities. There may be an opening for the UK to set a standard for the rest of the world, creating opportunities for UK specialists and the development of global networks.

In the best case scenario, trust in the practice increases and public relations is defined more precisely. Evaluation and analysis become essential and the practice works with colleges and universities ("what it's like in an office/professional environment"). Codes of conduct follow, as do more jobs and better salaries.

The media sector rebounds, with a comeback for trusted specialist and local media and engagement through social media. More people get more information and knowledge from media sources. Media

as businesses are sustainable, and able to take on challenges from public relations, as well as to assist public relations.

Best case scenario (2)

In the best case scenario, the majority of practitioners will be recognized by a strong professional body (CIPR), and will see the need for standards and training. Organizations will seek to employ well-trained practitioners with CIPR membership. By 2020, all organizations will have a public relations team/capability and commitment to public relations, which will be represented within the senior management team and involved at very early stages in dealing with any issue. It will no longer be an after-thought. 2020 will see responsible behaviour from 'organized' media and social media will be regulated.

CIPR Scotland, Edinburgh

Best case scenario(1)

In this, public relations practitioners will be seen as essential advisors, and able to demonstrate bottom line impact. With the passing of traditional media, the practice will exploit new media opportunities/options and budgets for public relations will increase. Reputation will be clearly linked to share price. By 2020 in the best case scenario, practitioners will be completely trusted as professionals. Continuing professional development will be seen as essential, as will the sharing of best practice. Awards for professional practice will be valued, and award programmes will be high profile. Public relations will be seen as leading, ahead of the curve, and 'the place to go' for solutions. There will be systems in place to ensure quick adoption of new channels and techniques.

In short: all organizations have a communications/public relations practitioner on the board. Trusted and credible, they keep their skills honed and their antennae sharp. They lead the way in communication with audiences. They are responsive and aware of new technological developments and work well with other functions to communicate in the best way possible, evidenced by hard evaluation.

Best case scenario(2)

In this, public relations will be recognized as cost-effective, and will be a chosen discipline within marketing, coming to be seen as more effective than direct marketing. This will be reflected in budget allocation. Robust, reliable and simple measurement approaches will be in place and easily understood, and directly correlated with objectives and business plans. Practitioners will be involved in business planning, as there is greater understanding of what public relations can deliver. Public relations will be seen as integral – public relations and communications will be mainstreamed throughout organizations and everyone will recognize their part in reputation management.

CIPR Cymru, Cardiff

Best case scenario (1)

In this, public relations will lead the way in changes and in developments in communication as applied in society. The practice will be seen as key in developing a good reputation and increasing transparency of organizations and companies. Public relations will be seen as adding measureable value (able to change perceptions and motivate), and so valuable as to have a seat on the board. The expertise of practitioners will be valued and valuable in itself, but value will not be measured only in statistical terms. In the best case scenario, government will respect the value of independent media and non-politicized public relations. People will trust authoritative sources and there will be popular support for the need for, and value of, professional standards in journalism and public relations.

Best case scenario (2)

In this, all public relations practitioners will be ahead of the curve in relation to developments in digital communication and seen as guardians of these forms of communication, ahead of advertising and marketing specialists. Public relations practice will boom as advertising revenues divert to public relations. It will be easier to work with global clients using digital communication. Traditional revenue streams will still be good, so new revenue streams will be supplementary. Perceptions of the practice and its value will be up, and so will fees. Public relations practitioners will be among the top advisors in business, well trained, respected and trusted. There will be greater awareness of public relations at board level, and public relations will be integrated into business planning.

CIPR East Anglia, Norwich

Best case scenario (1)

In this, by 2020 public relations will be proactive and self-regulating, seen as clean, honest and ethical, respected with a professional reputation (matched by professional levels of pay). The practice will be valued, and represented or advising at board level. It will be seen as crucial to success, a 'make or break' practice, and strategic. With buy-in from board level and fellow professionals, the practice will work to objectives and KPIs, will be understood by others educated in what public relations can contribute. It will have a 100% success rate ('all hits'), having better monitoring tools and professional guidelines (from CIPR). The practice will achieve 'synchronicity' between fresh talent and experience, and will be expert in the use of social media. The practice will encourage passion, honesty and integrity, and will be unafraid to fail, becoming more skillful in evaluating risk and drawing on a global perspective. Relevance will drive innovation and change. The practice should be fun, stretching practitioners to develop and learn.

Best case scenario (2)

In the best case scenario, public relations will command realistic budgets and will be seen as an equal in the boardroom, as well as able to show financial value of work. Practitioners will be involved in strategic planning at the outset and there will be realistic expectations of public relations. The ethical standards of the practice will be established. Chartered and registered status will lead to recognition and skill development. Public relations will have good recognition among fellow professionals and the public. The CIPR will be the authoritative voice of the profession. Research and evaluation will be plugged in, integral and universally applied, and there will be industry-accepted evaluation tools.

CIPR Special Interest Groups, London

Best case scenario (1)

In this, by 2020 public relations will be a presence in the board room, regularly approached for comment. Practitioners will be professional and trusted and public relations will be attractive as a career, attracting top talent and drawing on a mix of practical and theoretical knowledge at a high level. The practice will be well remunerated, influential, strategic and authoritative, thriving, inclusive and diverse. A huge CIPR membership will be signed up to ongoing CPD and a code of conduct. The ideal practitioner will be a CIPR member, accredited and appropriately qualified across all relevant areas. He or she will be: professional, ethical, enthusiastic, energetic, creative, flexible, agile, perceived as expert, and will have CPD in DNA. Practitioners will work to clearer cut job roles and job definitions (setting out, for example, what it means to be an account executive, manager or director, in terms of expertise and knowledge). A clearer pathway will map progression from entry to high level. The practice will be strong and respected, led by one professional body showing a better understanding of communications. It will provide best value and service for clients, drawing on a good spread of knowledge and qualifications and delivering better business outcomes. Every organization will have integrated communication. Public relations will add value and exceed expect, attracting the best talent and working under one umbrella phrase.

Best case scenario (2)

In the best case scenario, public relations will be seen more as a profession, and a function which must be carried out by a public relations professional, respected by the CEO. It will be a boardroom function, with public relations reporting to the CEO. There will be positive role models in the media. All practitioners will be committed to CPD. Public relations' contribution to GDP and the economy will be recognized. Looking at profitability, there will be increased investment in public relations, whose economic value will be recognized by government. The practice will be well rewarded, and will attract graduates to the profession. The financial value of reputation management will be on the balance sheet. By 2020, there will be a broadly accepted definition of the practice and practitioners will recognize that they belong to the industry/profession. There will be public understanding of the content and value of the profession, which will need qualified practitioners with an expert skill set. The CIPR and its role will be clearly defined.

CIPR Greater London group, London

Best case scenario (1)

In this, by 2020 public relations will have global accreditation, and only accredited practitioners will be recruited. Practitioners will be licensed, will take an ethical stance in practice, and will be trusted and respected. They will have the ability to work quickly and flexibly with social media (within a broader mix of media). Approaches to measurement will have won recognition – if not love – from chief financial officers. Agreed tools will have been accepted to measure spend and impact, and public relations will be able to demonstrate its value across the business, drawing on simple, effective metrics focused on outcomes.

Best case scenario (2)

In the best case scenario, public relations practice will be more representative of the wider society, allowing easier access to all. It will be trusted, on the board, seen as a profession, with practitioners highly qualified and accredited. It will be relevant, listened to, taken seriously, and practitioners will be known as reputation/trust managers, trust builders.

CIPR Midlands group, Birmingham

Best case scenario (1)

In this, by 2020 public relations will see digital communications on board level and recognized at board level, and will be lead the field in knowledge of digital communications. Practitioners will have formal training and qualifications in digital communications. Accountable evaluation of digital communication, which is simple and easy, will be available, and digital communications will be integrated into campaigns. Monitoring and evaluation tools will be effective. Budgets will be increased because of recognized value, and there will be smarter working through specialisms. As evaluation methods improve, credibility will improve. There will buy-in from board level. In an expanding industry, competition will lead to quality, in staff, work and results. Over-servicing will be reduced and practitioners will be paid for what they do. Transparency in costs will mean that these will be easier to present, and it will be easier for clients to see what they are buying. It will be easier to say no and to pushback against client demands, and to make recommendations to clients. Public relations will have increased reputation and credibility. Agencies and departments will be multifunctional. The Holy Grail of evaluation will have been found and introduced, recognized at board level. Clients will understand it, as it will be easy to present and understand, and to integrate into practice. It will stand alongside other marketing measurements, and will increase public relations' credibility, leading to bigger salaries for public relations. Other industries will look to public relations, which will be leading the field, winning new business and growing as an industry.

Best case scenario (2)

In the best case scenario, there will still be a print media industry. Practitioners will know what carries substance, which will be best for clients. They will be reactive and dynamic in response to situations

and challenges, creative and able to identify influencers. They will recognize which social media channels will last and have excellent account and campaign management skills. More talent will migrate to the Midlands. By 2020, there will be industry wide, agreed metrics, standards and regulations. There will also be reliable monitoring, transparent evaluation, and qualitative approaches will outweigh quantitative. Practitioners will be involved in defining metrics and clients will budget for evaluation. Practitioners will be able to maintain relationships with a strong media industry and will still have 'little black books' of contacts. There will be a strong demand for balanced journalism. Practitioners will be able to identify most influential bloggers and journalists and respond to a shift back to print media channels. There are still story hungry media.

CIPR Greater London (second group)

Best case scenario (1)

In the best case scenario, the practice becomes a true profession, and practitioners qualify as professionals in terms of both experience and qualifications. Unqualified practitioners are known as something else (as in law and accounting). There is a clear difference between qualified and unqualified practitioners, and a stratified profession (for example, chartered practitioners, accredited practitioners). There is a broader, comprehensive understanding of what is involved in the profession at entry. Clients also understand the profession, as do the media who understand what is involved in high profile roles. There is also a clear definition of the thinking abilities required in practice, and improved thinking power at work in the practice. The practice will have vastly greater respect, and there will be an emphasis on the science of communication, not the art. In the best case, skills will divide between craft (delivered by agencies) and strategic practice (in consultancies and in-house). There will be a respect for the profession and professionals, and distinct disciplines in the practice. Spin will be dead. Clients will buy strategy, not tactics. They will understand better what they are buying, employ better practitioners in-house, and will not be buying copywriting etc. Current agencies will decline – they will be smaller, charge more, and provide connections and craft skills. The profession becomes a full communications package, including direct marketing, advertising – anything that influences reputation.

Best case scenario (2)

In the best case scenario, employers will hire, train and fire to upgrade their human capital for competitive advantage, if best practice public relations is seen to deliver competitive advantage. Measurement will be seen as a professional requirement, particularly at board level. There will be a proliferation of 'chief influence officers' and the practice will have outstanding examples of measurement that have led to performance improvement. Diversity will have increased slightly. There will be more encouragement to entrants to the practice, and diversity will be considered in active recruitment. Expectations will need to be set by CIPR and employers for recruitment for diversity.

CIPR West of England, Bristol

Best case scenario (1)

In this, public relations will be seen as essential to success. Public relations is at the centre of marketing communications, having evolved from practical activation to content owners and providers to become the authors of media and self publication. All streams fall under 'public relations' on an equal footing. Diversity is valued and allows for specialism.

Best case scenario (2)

In the best case scenario, practitioners will only be able to practice if a member of the CIPR and/or PRCA adhering to a code of conduct and a form of professional standard of qualification. Public relations professionals will use insight based on real knowledge to apply effective public relations. Industry recognizes the benefits of this investment and knowledge. Public relations will be a profession that respects/values, rewards and retains experience no matter what the age or gender. In addition, stereotypes will have been removed – for example, that technology is only for the young.

CIPR North West, Manchester

Best case scenario (1)

In the best case scenario, new approaches to evaluation will validate social media and online activities. Clients will realize the benefits of new audiences – better than advertising – and develop a better understanding of interacting with them. Practitioners will be up-skilled and technically high powered to deal with two-way dialogue and huge audiences. There will be measurable, relevant and realistic objectives at the beginning of campaigns. More public relations professionals will be involved on the board, and there will be more skills in public relations – in data handling, statistics and strategy. Practitioners will no longer just be ‘good with people.’ Increased fees will be realized, as work is measurable and justified.

Public relations will be given chance/time to have business impact, through retained services.

Business impact will be seen in the long term and clients will buy into public relations as a result. All clients get public relations and the impact it can have.

Best case scenario (2)

In the best case scenario, the buyers for public relations services will be MDs and CEOs. Public relations will provide ideas, inspiration and make a multifunctional contribution working with all stakeholders. Budgets will increase. Marketing itself will increase in value. Public relations will take a place alongside lawyers and accountants. The practice is involved in a direct conversation with end users, no matter who influences them, we’re working directly with them. The practice is of intrinsic worth to a business. High value merits higher investment, advising on the value of media, who is important to your business. Public relations is a champion for journalism. By 2020, practitioners will be strategic heavyweights – they have youth, are business people, ‘brains’, entrepreneurs, working in a practice on an equal footing with lawyers and management consultants. They will have a ‘normal’ degree (implications for training), entering the business through articles and gaining direct experience, and better paid at entry level.

CIPR Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, Sheffield

Best case scenario (1)

In this, membership is repackaged and there is a significant increase in membership.

CIPR leads the agenda in making use of new tools, and developers of new technology consult CIPR at R and D stage. CIPR leads, proactively campaigns to equalize pay levels, and actively encourages industry changes. Gender differential in pay levels decreases. CIPR puts its own house in order (‘beacon’).

Best case scenario (2)

In the best case scenario, the value of public relations will be understood by directors/senior managers. There will be an increased public profile for public relations, which will not be seen as ‘just spin.’ * A mandatory licence to practice will be accepted across the profession. A better gender/ethnic mix provides a richer culture for practitioners to operate in, and attracts a wider range of clients. The practice reflects the communities/society in which it operates. Measurement will be a universally adopted tool, built into every single campaign and piece of work. It will be an integrated and accepted part of public relations process and methodology.

CIPR North East, Newcastle

Best case scenario (1)

In this, there will be better client understanding of technology and client expectations will be more driven by social media. Practitioners will be using the right social media for each client as second nature, and will be shaping social media themselves. By 2020, there will be respect -- greater respect -- for the practice, which will be viewed as necessary business expenditure, and necessary to business planning and success. There will be obligatory CIPR membership for qualified professionals

and professional standards. It will be seen as an honourable practice, and not as spin. Membership of CIPR will grow through greater recognition of the importance of public relations, and as employers understand the value of qualified practitioners (the 'Corgi' requirement). CIPR membership will be associated with positive values and meeting professional standards, and there will be recognition on the part of leaders and board members that CIPR membership is critical for recruitment. As in the most likely scenario, movement between public relations sectors will increase and increase understanding and respect between sectors.

Best case scenario (2)

In this, by 2020, practitioners will have to have accreditation, which stamps the practitioner as professional. There will have been successful targeting of members aged 25 – 34, to ensure retention, and there will have been links established to student courses to build membership of 18 – 24 year-olds. Membership will be on the boardroom agenda. By 2020, there will be recognition that public relations is an investment, and it will be seen as adding to the bottom line as a business tool. There will be confidence that measurements are robust, and there will be approved on-line digital software to measure social/digital public relations. Public relations will be well-taught in universities, and public relations will lead the way in measuring reputation. By 2020, there will be widely understood standards, nationally and globally. There will be 'qualified' practitioners, creative competition, accepted client/practitioner relationships and on-going training. Recruitment agencies will have a clear agenda for recruitment to public relations practice.

CIPR Northern Ireland, Belfast

Best case scenario (1)

In this, we will come out of recession. There will be a thriving private sector, in which the value of public relations will be realized. It will also be seen as more relevant in the public sector. Public relations will be better integrated into business models. Ethics will be clearly defined and publicized to external publics. There will be a code of practice applicable to all, and a uniform code of practice for all public relations practice. There will be a better understanding of public relations does and what it can achieve, enhancing its value. There will be better guidelines for lobbyists, in Northern Ireland Assembly and at Westminster. Public relations will tell a positive and creative story. It will be more widely used for economic reasons, providing better or best value. It will offer more opportunities to tell the whole story, and will have more credibility with media. Evaluation mechanisms will be strong and show value of public relations and will need to be exploited. Public relations will be recognized as able to target with flexibility.

Best case scenario (2)

In this, by 2020, practitioners will be leading and developing new and better communications channels and tools, and new ways of using existing channels. The profession will have invested in skills training across the range of public relations and relevant skills, demonstrating the unique value and contribution of public relations. By 2020, more intelligible tools and techniques will have been developed to measure the specific impact of public relations activity and spend.

Worst case scenarios

CIPR Wessex, Bournemouth

Worst case scenario(1)

Public relations' licence to operate will be demolished by regulation of communication and employment, leading to a collapse in employment, growth and resources. Public relations will be permanently equated with spin. Social media business models will collapse and 'Murdoch will live forever.'

Worst case scenario(2)

In the worst case scenario, the practice will be driven by market demands, pushed to tactical work that could easily be outsourced and open to factory style production. The practice will remain misunderstood and not respected, practiced by individuals fitting to stereotypes of what practitioners should be and disconnected from diversity in the wider society. Stereotypes now show some of the following characteristics:

- practitioners are essentially operatives
- female practitioners are managed
- male practitioners manage
- the practice is in the process of being downgraded and
- is white, monocultural and ageist
- the practice, although articulate, is dominated by writing

CIPR Scotland, Aberdeen

Worst case scenario(1)

Public relations' reputation will diminish further, with downsides for the practice. Obsession with measurement will lead to attempts to measure and put a monetary value on every aspect of the practice. By trying to do everything, practitioners will become 'jacks of all trades' and quality of work in all areas of the practice will suffer.

Worst case scenario(2)

The worst case scenario, looking towards 2020, sees public relations as failing to keep up with developments, falling so far behind as to be ineffective, as a practice isolated from the interests of the younger generation. Its use of measurement will be blind, and measurement will be carried out for the sake of it – others will see through this, and deny recognition to public relations seeing it as ineffective. Its reputation may slip further.

CIPR Scotland, Glasgow

Worst case scenario (1)

In the worst case scenario, standards may go down with increased numbers of people coming into the practice, where their entry is not managed properly and where they bring poorly developed skills – for example, in English – into the practice. The spread of public relations into organizations and agencies may dilute the skills currently available to the practice. Professional bodies may fail to take the initiative and set up the necessary regime for all to sign up to – to ensure that all are skilled.

Some sectors may weaken public relations, by allowing junior staff lacking skills to carry out public relations work. Roles may be diluted – as advertising agencies go, public relations may take on more, but work less well. The reputation of public relations may suffer as a result of lack of skills or scandals arising from poor public relations work. Salary levels may slip in the short term and jobs may be lost, for example in local government.

Worst case scenario (2)

In this, practitioners do not recognize the need for standards, and have no respect for standards and training. There is a lack of incentives for training, and membership of professional bodies is in decline. Public relations is still seen as a luxury and not as a necessity, and there is a lack of belief in the public relations profession, as public relations is seen as spin, manipulation and a force for evil. By 2020, there may only be digital news – no print – and news will be dumbed down, fast-paced, not in-depth and unregulated.

CIPR Scotland, Edinburgh

Worst case scenario(1)

In the worst case scenario, the roles of public relations advisors will be stolen by others, as the practice is seen as “failing to rise to the occasion,” a profession that cannot keep up with expectations. There may be high profile tarnishing of the practice by individuals or organizations. Practitioners will remain outside the boardroom, and the practice will be seen as ‘fluffy.’ Public relations budgets will be cut. There will be too many ‘scrappy’ public relations courses, while the CIPR wobbles on standards.

Competition between professional bodies damages the practice, which has regulation imposed upon it. Awards schemes fold. By 2020, the practice will be over-saturated with technology, overwhelmed by channels, and stuck in old ways, using traditional media, old techniques and old measures such as AVEs. The public relations specialism will be undermined by others.

In short: the industry will have been tarnished by poor practice or a scandal. No regulation has been imposed. We are still stuck in the old ways of communicating, using the media. We are irrelevant – our role has been stolen by other industries.

Worst case scenario(2)

In the worst case scenario, public relations will be cut from budgets or budgets will be reduced. Pressures of work and on budgets will result in a decrease in attempts to measure public relations activities, and failures to evaluate public relations will lead to loss of reputation for the practice. The practice will continue to be seen as an ‘add-on’ or ‘necessary evil,’ leading to unreasonable cuts in staff and budgets.

CIPR Cymru, Cardiff

Worst case scenario (1)

In the worst case scenario, technology, communications and society evolve, but public relations is behind the curve and others, in marketing, step in. As greater transparency in communication develops, public relations is excluded or seen as negative due to its reputation. It will be seen as an expensive add-on, ‘nice to have’ or a source of ‘added risk.’ Some of the routine tasks of the practice will be automated. People will distrust anything mediated, meaning people will begin to trust anecdote and unmediated information more.

Worst case scenario (2)

In the worst case scenario, public relations will be overtaken by advertising and marketing agencies as message carriers. There will be a dwindling number of public relations agencies as the practice is no longer relevant. Spending on public relations will go elsewhere as public relations is seen as irrelevant against demand for digital skills. The practice will be affected by competition from all agencies due to convergence and the use of unskilled mavericks. The nature of society in 2020 will mean that long-term reputation planning is redundant. We will be in a continuing slump. Public relations will be an afterthought, not joined to business objectives or showing value. Crises will be mismanaged and reputation will be damaged. The practice will be seen as irrelevant in a fast-paced society.

CIPR East Anglia, Norwich

Worst case scenario (1)

In the worst case scenario, public relations will be reactive, synonymous with bad news as a part of corrupted journalism, and seen as dishonest. It will be untargeted, just 'fire-fighting,' taking payment for manipulation, 'organized lying' and wasting journalists' time. Max Clifford remains the most prominent practitioner ('chair of CIPR!'). In evaluation, the practice stays focused on column inches, with a low success rate, with no-one seeing value of results achieved in practice. Public relations will be overtaken by other professions, and on the back foot. We become too conservative, dull and predictable ('no fun'), while CIPR fails to lead from the front or innovate.

Worst case scenario (2)

In this, public relations will still be shoving out press releases, and brought in at the last minute, when things go wrong. Unrealistic expectations will be held of the practice, and there will be no budget for public relations. Practitioners will be seen as amateurs, and there will be a lack of professional skills and professional development. The practice will have a poor public image, and practitioners will be seen as 'spin doctors' involved in telling lies. At board level and elsewhere, little will be seen of public relations' performance data. Nothing will have changed – AVEs will still be recognized, and outputs not outcomes assessed.

CIPR Special Interest Groups, London

Worst case scenario (1)

In the worst case scenario, public relations will have a poor reputation, still involving spin doctors. It will be seen as shady and mistrusted. There will be no growth in the practice, which will lose talent and possibly be absorbed into marketing. There will also be low levels of training and development. There will be no professional body for practitioners, and public relations will be seen as a second rate career. For practitioners, there will be no clear career progression and no measurement of standards. There will be a lack of direction to the practice. Practitioners will have no influence, no voice, and will be seen as prepared to compromise their values, in a poorly paid practice. Practice will be further fragmented, to the detriment of the profession, with overlapping roles and poor value for money.

Worst case scenario(2)

In this, public relations will be marked by more scandal, and will remain unrecognized, seen as a poor relation of advertising and marketing. There will be a flight of talent from the practice, and there may be no CIPR. The practice will be reduced and less profitable, poorly rewarded and paid. There will be a lack of career progression in a practice seen as optional or irrelevant. The practice may be absorbed into advertising and marketing, and ignored. There will be multiple and competing definitions of the practice, as well as competing professional bodies. People with dubious or shallow motives will be attracted to the profession.

CIPR Greater London group, London

Worst case scenario (1)

In the worst case scenario, public relations will see declining membership in professional bodies and may be swallowed up into marketing. The practice will have less access to senior management. It will have a 'head in sand' attitude to developments in media, which will be unaddressed. The practice will have lost control of use of media, and removed from partnerships making use of the media. In measurement, the debate about how to measure public relations continues, with no consensus. Steps backward will have been taken, and measurement will be entirely based on AVEs. Measures of output dominate.

Worst case scenario(2)

In this, there will be a backlash against standards of practice. Practice will not change at all, and become more insular. It will be mistrusted, with no control of reputation or flows of information. There will be no role for public relations practitioners, or voice for them in organizations, and they will be working in silos. The practice will disappear, taken over by advertising, marketing etc. News is accessed directly by citizens with no need for public relations people. The industry fails to keep up with changes.

CIPR Midlands group, Birmingham

Worst case scenario (1)

In the worst case scenario, public relations will lose out to advertising agencies, which will run campaigns. A skills gap will open as technology moves too fast and in face of information overload. Public relations loses the ability to identify influencers, as well as credibility with consumers and clients. There will be no budget for digital communications as clients and interns run campaigns. The practice becomes 'too digital' which alienates older professionals and traditional media are wiped out. The practice is subject to increased regulation. Public relations budgets are slashed or allocated elsewhere. Smaller agencies decrease in number and salaries are smaller. There is less recruitment to the practice and the quality of staff and executives diminishes. There is no buy-in to public relations at board level. The recession remains and deepens, and consultancies find they are involved in massive over servicing – 'working for free.' There are moves towards payment on results. The costs of training and keeping skills relevant rise. There are no improvements in evaluation methods and no recognized standards, ways of proving value. There are too many different theories of practice and everyone does their own thing, inconsistently. Boards and clients only want to see AVEs and the value of public relations depreciates. The practice is a slave to too many different opinions – is it a 'one size fits all' approach across different clients and sectors? As a practice, it is not able to change behaviours.

Worst case scenario (2)

In this, practitioners' skills will die out because of social media. Graduates will be under-qualified and unemployable. Practitioners will lose business skills. There will be less opportunity for team work. London will be seen as the media hub. There will be cynicism regarding evaluation. There will be no formal evaluation, or on-line metrics. Quantitative approaches will outweigh qualitative approaches to evaluation. Social media channels will proliferate, and there will be no print or broadcast media. The media will be solely focused on social media, fed by untrained journalists and bloggers. Editorial skills will die out, and journalists will lack time.

CIPR Greater London (second group)

Worst case scenario (1)

In this, 'public relations' ceases to be of use as a term. The profession fragments and becomes channel and skill focused, and practitioners have no overall strategic role. There is greater fragmentation of thinking, and lower placement of communication in the hierarchy. The worst development is also the most likely, looking at the role of the practitioner – as mentioned under the most likely scenario, the term public relations dies off as a recognized term. Craft skills are provided and bought by other sectors, such as marketing and law.

Worst case scenario (2)

In this, practitioners exclude and marginalize themselves by being so inadequate in critical thinking. Similarly, lack of measurement will lead to lack of credibility and marginalization. Measurement standards remain the same, but look worse as best practice elsewhere improves. Current mix in the practice remains the same – public relations is not recommended as a career by careers officers, or viewed as a viable career.

CIPR West of England, Bristol

Worst case scenario (1)

In the worst case scenario, public relations is disregarded entirely, absorbed into marketing or an administration function. It is not at the centre of marketing communication, and does not exist, having been pushed out by other disciplines. There is no cohesion in the practice, and the streams of practice have become so individual they are unrecognizable and devalued.

Worst case scenario (2)

In this, CIPR/PRCA membership dwindles and the organizations fold, leaving no professional body or standards. Public relations plans developed with no insight and based on little or no knowledge, using only assumptions or out-dated experiences. Everyone over the age of 40 is either out of work, or having to go freelance.

CIPR North West, Manchester

Worst case scenario (1)

In the worst case scenario, public relations is shrouded in mystique by technical terms. There is no real interaction with audiences, just noise. The new culture of social media not met, through restrictions on use of technology, or limitations within the team trying to work with social media. There is a continuing struggle with advertisers and direct marketing, and reputation and management consultants take over the strategic space. Clients equate coverage with immediate sales, and short term expectations regarding business impact are unrealistic.

Worst case scenario (2)

In this, people will do public relations themselves, responding to the threat of social media – CEOs will be doing their own tweeting. Budgets for public relations activities will be lower, and public relations will be swallowed up by other disciplines. There will be an erosion of the ‘dark arts’ skills of public relations. The practice will fail to attract the best people. In the media, we will lose the daily newspaper – newspapers will be features led. Public relations will be marginalized, having failed to move with the times. In a big shift to social media, we will be left behind. Practitioners will still be seen as ‘fluffy.’ There will not be enough quality among practitioners, who will not be interested enough in business and will have poor technical skills and writing ability. They will not have grasped their career opportunities, allow them to be grabbed by web and search engine optimization people. They will gain face time with clients. Companies will not invest in training their public relations staff.

CIPR Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, Sheffield

Worst case scenario (1)

In the worst case scenario, membership falls significantly. PRCA membership, however, increases. There will be a ‘confused’ pool of potential members, not knowing who they should join. The practice ‘backs the wrong technology horse’ and fails to keep pace. Industry and developers look elsewhere (PRCA). Pay equity gets worse – men are paid more, and there are fewer women in the industry. Pay levels for women decrease further.

Worst case scenario (2)

In this, company bosses fail to see any value in public relations, and as the economic crisis deepens departments shut and agencies close. Technological advances make the industry redundant, and promotional activity is done by ‘other means.’ Public relations is seen as a stuffy, tired profession dominated by certain gender/ethnic groups in which it is impossible to attract people from other groups. The practice looks deeply unattractive to clients and potential recruits. In measurement, there are no tangible improvements from the current situation. There remain an over-reliance on AVEs and little acceptance of the value of public relations and its measurement.

CIPR North East, Newcastle

Worst case scenario (1)

In the worst case scenario, public relations will not have embraced social media, understood it, incorporated its use as a marketing tool, or trained staff to respond according to positive/negative comments. In relation to social media, there will be a lack of cooperation and sharing of knowledge and experience, or identification of which platforms to use. Reputation of the practice will deteriorate, and public relations will be seen as irrelevant/a waste of money, lacking in credibility. It may be absorbed into other professions. Membership in CIPR will remain the same or drop, due to lack of value. Rival bodies may be seen as having more standing, offering membership at lower rates and cheaper training. Reputation may be weakened through financial instability, scandal or inappropriate behaviour. There will be a lack of understanding and respect between people within different sectors of public relations.

Worst case scenario (2)

In the worst case scenario, the disappearance or collapse of CIPR is possible, through merger with other organizations such as the PRCA or CIM. Membership may decline, into an 'old school', aging membership. There may be no need for CIPR if other professional organizations train in public relations. There may be a continuing lack of understanding of the value and role of public relations. Members will need to feel and understand benefits of membership. Problems of measurement will continue – there will be no agreed/uniform metrics, and no investment in measurement, or in training for measurement. Other professional bodies will set benchmarks or metrics. There will be a lack of advancement in the public relations profession/CIPR and less commitment to evaluation. Other related industry special interests can hinder development, for example the NLA, as can costs.

CIPR Northern Ireland, Belfast

Worst case scenario (1)

In the worst case scenario, the economy moves into double dip recession and dies, with job losses. Public relations is seen as a luxury, not a necessity. Red tape – regulations governing NIA, licences, music etc. – increases. Employment low, hampers growth, puts strain on small businesses – a big part of the Northern Ireland economy. The public relations industry fragments, with undercutting [in charges for services] and the rise of 'one-man' bands. In terms of developments in ethics and new examples for practice, there will be more of the same – more scandals relating to lobbying and more media exposes, damaging to public relations' reputation, also seen as the most likely outcome. Clients and employers will stop using public relations, partly because public relations does not sell itself well enough and is linked to recession.

Worst case scenario (2)

In the worst case scenario, the practice will have failed to embrace new opportunities, media channels and tools, but will be clinging to old habits and media. Practitioners will be overtaken by others, for example their clients, in the use of new media. Public relations will be seen as ineffective due to lack of expertise across disciplines, and will become marginalized, losing focus and spread too thinly. Public relations spend will wither away due to lack of demonstrable impact.

APPENDIX VII

PR 2020 Recommendations

Wessex

1. The scenarios suggest the need for improvements to education and training.
2. Those involved in the practice need to lead by example and leverage role models.
3. There remains a strong need to improve approaches to evaluation, to demonstrate the value that public relation delivers.
4. Practitioners need to develop knowledge and ownership of digital communications.
5. There remains a need for better definition of what public relations as a practice is meant to achieve – what is public relations and what is it to do?

Aberdeen

1. Public relations practitioners must act as professionals, keep on top of developments and collectively do better in their work, improving their use of the tools available to them
2. Efforts to improve public relations must be collective, not individual
3. To stay on the cutting edge, there need to be ways of sharing best practice and the practice needs to embrace a new generation of talent
4. Industry bodies need to commit to research and development, carrying out research into new methods. These efforts should be headed by industry leaders
5. New tools need to be assessed against media requirements and the coverage they offer
6. The purpose of evaluation should be questioned to make it more meaningful
7. The continuing importance of evaluation must be recognized

Group 1 (of two) realized in discussion that examining public relations and its better integration with other areas of marketing assumed that public relations is a part of marketing. They broadened their discussion to look at public relations as a practice that should be integrated with marketing and other areas of management.

Glasgow

1. The CIPR should provide guidance to organizations looking to employ public relations staff
2. The CIPR should be seen as the leading body for public relations practitioners and as an authoritative body
3. The CIPR should set minimum training/skills required for members
4. CIPR members/chartered practitioners should be seen as the leading professionals in the UK
5. Public relations professionals should see training as a must – the CIPR should provide relevant training. Membership and training should be affordable
6. Practitioners should represent – do their own public relations – for the practice
7. Public relations should be more proactive, rather than be forced into situations
8. Scotland should not be ignored, as a country
9. There is a need to re-evaluate definitions of the practice, roles and codes of conduct
10. There is a need for more collaboration with further and higher education
11. For the CIPR, there should be more engagement with members on a face-to-face basis, rather than through email
12. The CIPR should raise its own profile
13. There is a need for closer work with human resources on job roles and requirements
14. Practice would benefit from greater use of evidence, and scenarios
15. Social media guidelines will require frequent updating
16. Improvements are necessary in discussions with the media
17. There must be follow-ups to exercises like this!

Edinburgh

1. We need global, industry standards and guidelines on recognized evaluation (including guidance on how to value keeping stories out of the media)
2. These would allow us to show how cost effective public relations is, but we will need to go further to show the corporate value of the practice, to get a seat on the board and demonstrate that public relations is business critical
3. Public relations has to be shown to be intrinsic throughout the organization, establishing a culture of communication and customer care at all levels. This requires a cultural change, to be led by us (communicators)
4. There must be buy-in from the top down, which means taking part in a conversation about where the organization is going
5. Priorities and focus must be set from above to allow public relations and communications to be more strategic
6. Development of public relations tactics should be creative and cost-effective
7. No gloss, no gimmicks – just results that affect reputation

Cardiff

1. Public relations practice has to understand and embrace change – we must continue to learn, through constant re-education
2. The 'old chestnut' – public relations needs to do public relations for public relations. We must become capable to demonstrating value, professional values, and the value of the contribution we make to democratic society
3. There is a need for stronger codes (of conduct and of ethics) and understanding of these
4. In government, there is a need to work for a clearer separation of political communication and government information work, since confusion of the two has had a negative impact on public relations
5. There is a need for a greater public understanding of how the media and public relations work together, through media studies education
6. There is a need to address the question of why the CIPR has such a small percentage of the large group of practitioners known to be working in the UK in membership
7. There is a need for arrangement for constant re-education
8. How will public relations stay on top of developments – how will the CIPR, consultancy management, encourage the discipline to stay current?
9. How will public relations deal with convergence – of communications, advertising and marketing agencies – and maintain share of resources allocated to advertising and public relations?
10. Practitioners need to have pride in what they do – will this happen?
11. Practice will evolve differently in Wales – there is an emphasis on ethics in practice and training. The Welsh Assembly is subject to public scrutiny, and the Welsh media are enfeebled. There is a growth in popular action, directed at a more accessible assembly. The Welsh language and culture are sources of action. Wales is a 'network of networks' with active voluntary organizations and participation in these. New media are fostering links among the networks. In-house practitioners don't see themselves as 'public relations practitioners,' taking other titles. There are few HQs in Wales, and less separate spend on public relations

Norwich

1. The CIPR should develop as the voice of the profession (and should have the best public relations in the country)

2. There is a need to examine who speaks for the profession (parallel with the CBI – is there a need for a CEO, or an independent, salaried president, in office for a longer term (3 years?) and able to become the face of the profession?) On a matter like hacking, what did the CIPR have to say on the fundamental issues involved? The CIPR should also comment on bad public relations – public relations can come to be associated with incompetence
3. The CIPR should lead on new developments and innovation (looking back, we haven't done enough)
4. The CIPR should promote practitioner qualifications to HR and employers (in health care, for example, people have to be chartered/qualified. By 2020, greater progress should have been made of chartered status for practitioners)
5. Lack of self regulation may need to regulation
6. There is a need to strengthen codes, revisit ethical questions. The practice needs to be clean, honest and ethical, and chartered status very important
7. Public relations is not a communication practice, but one that makes use of communication – do we need to rebrand the practice?
8. Practitioners need greater self confidence (from access to the board, and also from changes in the way they see themselves)
9. Much greater recognition needs to be given to CPD – what percentage of CIPR members are doing this?
10. It would be useful to have an effective mentoring system in place
11. We need to synchronize experience and fresh talent?

SIGs

1. We need to work towards a single, strong, respected professional body covering all aspects of communication: a range of professional qualifications, sharing experience, knowledge and best practice, developing defined career progression routes, with all practitioners committed to CPD, qualifications and codes of conduct (Group 1)
2. Need to develop an integrated and meaningful toolkit to measure impact and value of communications against business objectives, to be used as a standard by all practitioners and their employers (Group 1)
3. 'Public relations' as a term should be scrapped, to provide a clean slate for communicators, lose the historic stigma, help foster respect, and open new business opportunities (Group 1)
4. There should be increased emphasis on qualifications and training, and increased use of and recognition for CPD (Group 2)
5. We need to quantify profession's contribution to GDP and economy (Group 2)
6. Reputation should be identified as balance sheet asset (separated out from goodwill) (Group 2)
7. We need to develop a clear articulation of the definition of public relations and reputation management and get consensus on this from a broad spectrum of the profession (Group 2)

Greater London 1

1. There should be a vote on international licensing of the profession (Group 1)
2. Fifty per cent of practitioners should belong to a professional body (Group 1)
3. There should be stronger representation/profile building [of public relations practice] to students, employers and training bodies (Group 1)

4. There should be one global ethical code (Group 1)
5. Social media training should become a core part of CIPR/PRCA/University training (Group 1)
6. The public relations industry should end the debate on ownership of social media and move on to strategy regarding their use (Group 1)
7. Measurement training should become a core part of CIPR/PRCA/University training (Group 1)
8. There should be one agreed measurement score for the industry, focused more on outcomes (Group 1)
9. There is a need for better and continuous professional education, for recognized qualifications, regular assessments of both practice and theory, and a stronger code of conduct (Group 2)

In round-table discussion, reference was made to Philip Sheldrake's view of 'influence professionals,' with public relations practitioners being one group within a larger group of such professionals. A view was also offered of the importance of the 'hacking' scandal, which is in some ways beneficial to public relations practice, because it shows that practitioners are influential.

Birmingham

1. In the interests of developing good practitioners, a mentoring process should be formalized, and the significance and value of mentors recognized
2. Organizations will need to invest in their people
3. Practitioners and organizations should share knowledge and best practice, through job swaps and networking
4. Organizations should be able to expect loyalty from individuals provided with training
5. There is need for public relations apprenticeships
6. There remains a need to develop and implement an industry standard for evaluation, to be adapted to different scenarios/challenges/objectives. It should emerge from consultation with business leaders.
7. Boards should have public relations professionals
8. Public relations evaluation should be built into business auditing activities
9. The industry should work with monitoring and evaluation agencies to develop standards for evaluation
10. Public relations should help journalists to keep the media industry thriving
11. The relationship between advertising and public relations should be improved to gain editorial coverage

In discussion of the scenarios and recommendations, evaluation was seen as a 'running thread.' The challenge in measurement and evaluation is how to measure changes in behaviour. There remains a need to educate business leaders on how public relations can help the bottom line.

The Midlands group also asked – "Are we fearful of the best case scenario?" Working towards the best case scenario means becoming transparent, accountable and better at what we do.

Greater London 2

1. For CIPR, there needs to be a meaningful, stratified membership with transparency of appointment at each level of membership
2. There needs to be enforced discipline

3. Externally, there is a need for effective public relations for public relations, measured through perception surveys
4. There need to be better links between practice and the academic study of public relations
5. Chartered practitioner status should be seen as the gold standard
6. Elevate training – give it a strategic element, and put in place CPD for senior people in the profession
7. Measurement should be a driver of improvement and success
8. There is a need to make chartered status mean more

Two questions: would legislation for the profession be beneficial (governing, for example, public affairs or internal communications practice)? By 2020, will public relations be anti-democratic or pro-democracy?

Bristol

1. Every CIPR member should lobby their companies to enforce professional standards.
2. Heads and chairs of CIPR should lobby government about the importance of public relations practice.
3. CIPR should be more prepared to police standards.
4. Public relations needs to stop questioning itself and debating its own position – it is itself and clear about what it is, but it also needs to re-invent itself, promote itself and educate as to what it involves
5. Public relations needs to claim its place in marketing communications – “occupy the land.”
6. Public relations is content creation – not at all media relations, it is brand and reputation building.

One of the groups compared public relations to bookselling. For booksellers, there is the prospect that supermarkets like Tesco sell books, and bookshops selling books compete with the supermarkets, and with specialist stores – like fishing shops – that also sell books. In a worst case scenario, bookshops go out of business. Public relations has to be like the best bookshop – specialist, complete, knowledgeable, a point of reference for all interested in books, and indispensable.

Manchester

1. Public relations should not be scared of innovation – should take control of this and experiment
2. It is up to us, as practitioners, to educate clients and others
3. There’s a need to recruit business savvy people who know public relations and the importance of communication in business
4. Senior practitioners should be addressing business audiences, such as the CBI, Institute of Directors
5. There’s a need to recruit graduates who take public relations and its scope seriously – public relations could be approached through articles, for graduates with general degrees (firsts, ‘thinkers’)
6. We should celebrate young people in practice
7. There is a need to re-examine and clarify the term public relations
8. We need to set measureable objectives (more numeracy)

Sheffield

1. There's a need to repackage payment for membership – according to income. There should also be more flexible arrangements for payment of membership fees, and differing rates for membership according to sectors.
2. There should research and investment in the development of new technology, in-house expertise (we know the tools, but can we invent them?)
3. CIPR should recognize and act on gender pay imbalance, and get its own house in order
4. There are needs for understanding of public relations, public relations for public relations, and new ways to communicate the value of public relations

Newcastle

1. There is a need for a drive to retain members aged 25 – 34, and to recruit more student members
2. There is a need to invest in professional education, and measurement
3. The code of practice should be promoted
4. Reputation is most worrying – the practice needs credibility, membership, accreditation (the 'Corgi' argument: homeowners look to plumbers who are 'Corgi' registered to install household boilers safely and reliably. Corgi registration is an assurance of quality. Only practitioners who are accredited should be provide advice and service to ensure quality of work)
5. CPD should be compulsory
6. It must be recognized that public relations goes beyond media relations – it is strategic, part of objective setting right at the outset in decision-making and planning
7. Public relations is more than the application of journalistic skills
8. What about 'over-qualified' practitioners – where are the roles for them?

Belfast

1. There should be collaboration with the IT industry to tap into skills and innovations that allow us to lead in the area of social media.
2. There should be more and better tool-kits, and greater awareness of those available.
3. There should be more awareness and circulation of case studies, illustrating best practice, innovations in the industry. Time to read should be built into the daily routine, training and personal development plans.
4. The CIPR should commission/develop new ways of measuring impact, and should take responsibility for getting key industry players together to inform and shape these. We need to clarify measurement and evaluation to demonstrate real value
5. Public relations for public relations should be improved.
6. We need to lobby against red tape/unnecessary legislation.
7. CIPR could lead raising standards across the industry – anyone practicing public relations should/must be a CIPR member. Costs of membership should be reviewed.

Summary recommendations

CIPR encouraged and expected to provide leadership

18. The CIPR should provide guidance to organizations looking to employ public relations staff; the CIPR should be seen as the leading body for public relations practitioners and as an authoritative body; the CIPR should set minimum training/skills required for members; CIPR members/chartered practitioners should be seen as the leading professionals in the UK; membership and training should be affordable; for the CIPR, there should be more engagement with members on a face-to-face basis, rather than through email; the CIPR should raise its own profile; there is a need to address the question of why the CIPR has such a small percentage of the large group of practitioners known to be working in the UK in membership; the CIPR should develop as the voice of the profession (and should have the best public relations in the country); there is a need to examine who speaks for the profession (parallel with the CBI – is there a need for a CEO, or an independent, salaried president, in office for a longer term (3 years?) and able to become the face of the profession?); on a matter like hacking, what did the CIPR have to say on the fundamental issues involved?; the CIPR should also comment on bad public relations – public relations can come to be associated with incompetence; the CIPR should lead on new developments and innovation (looking back, we haven't done enough); the CIPR should promote practitioner qualifications to HR and employers (in health care, for example, people have to be chartered/qualified. By 2020, greater progress should have been made of chartered status for practitioners); we need to work towards a single, strong, respected professional body covering all aspects of communication: a range of professional qualifications, sharing experience, knowledge and best practice, developing defined career progression routes, with all practitioners committed to CPD, qualifications and codes of conduct; there should be a vote on international licensing of the profession; fifty per cent of practitioners should belong to a professional body; for CIPR, there needs to be a meaningful, stratified membership with transparency of appointment at each level of membership; there needs to be enforced discipline; there is a need to make chartered status mean more; every CIPR member should lobby their companies to enforce professional standards; Heads and chairs of CIPR should lobby government about the importance of public relations practice; CIPR should be more prepared to police standards; there's a need to repackage payment for membership – according to income; there should also be more flexible arrangements for payment of membership fees, and differing rates for membership according to sectors; CIPR should recognize and act on gender pay imbalance, and get its own house in order; there is a need for a drive to retain members aged 25 – 34, and to recruit more student members; we need to lobby against red tape/unnecessary legislation; CIPR could lead raising standards across the industry – anyone practicing public relations should/must be a CIPR member; costs of membership should be reviewed.

Improvements to education and training

19. The scenarios suggest the need for improvements to education and training; public relations professionals should see training as a must – the CIPR should provide relevant training; there is a need for arrangement for constant re-education; much greater recognition needs to be given to CPD – what percentage of CIPR members are doing this?; it would be useful to have an effective mentoring system in place; there should be increased emphasis on qualifications and training, and increased use of and recognition for CPD; there is a need for better and continuous professional education, for recognized qualifications, regular assessments of both practice and theory, and a stronger code of conduct; in the interests of developing good practitioners, a mentoring process should be formalized, and the significance and value of mentors recognized; organizations will need to invest in their people; practitioners and organizations should share knowledge and best practice, through job swaps and networking; organizations should be able to expect loyalty from individuals provided with training; there is need for public relations apprenticeships; chartered practitioner status should be seen as the gold standard; elevate training – give it a strategic element, and put in place CPD for senior people in the profession; there is a need to invest in professional education; the code of

practice should be promoted; CPD should be compulsory; there should be more awareness and circulation of case studies, illustrating best practice, innovations in the industry; time to read should be built into the daily routine, training and personal development plans.

Practitioners to develop confidence, lead by example

20. Public relations practitioners must act as professionals, keep on top of developments and collectively do better in their work, improving their use of the tools available to them; practitioners should represent – do their own public relations – for the practice; those involved in the practice need to lead by example and leverage role models; efforts to improve public relations must be collective, not individual; the ‘old chestnut’ – public relations needs to do public relations for public relations. We must become capable to demonstrating value, professional values, and the value of the contribution we make to democratic society; efforts to improve public relations must be collective, not individual; practitioners need to have pride in what they do – will this happen?; practitioners need greater self confidence (from access to the board, and also from changes in the way they see themselves); there should be stronger representation/profile building [of public relations practice] to students, employers and training bodies; externally, there is a need for effective public relations for public relations, measured through perception surveys; there’s a need to recruit business savvy people who know public relations and the importance of communication in business; senior practitioners should be addressing business audiences, such as the CBI, Institute of Directors; there’s a need to recruit graduates who take public relations and its scope seriously – public relations could be approached through articles, for graduates with general degrees (firsts, ‘thinkers’); reputation is most worrying – the practice needs credibility, membership, accreditation (the ‘Corgi’ argument: homeowners look to plumbers who are ‘Corgi’ registered to install household boilers safely and reliably. Corgi registration is an assurance of quality. Only practitioners who are accredited should be provide advice and service to ensure quality of work); what about ‘over-qualified’ practitioners – where are the roles for them;? public relations for public relations should be improved.

Need clear thinking and guidance on evaluation

21. There remains a strong need to improve approaches to evaluation, to demonstrate the value that public relation delivers; the purpose of evaluation should be questioned to make it more meaningful; the continuing importance of evaluation must be recognized; practice would benefit from greater use of evidence, and scenarios; we need global, industry standards and guidelines on recognized evaluation (including guidance on how to value keeping stories out of the media). These would allow us to show how cost effective public relations is, but we will need to go further to show the corporate value of the practice, to get a seat on the board and demonstrate that public relations is business critical; need to develop an integrated and meaningful toolkit to measure impact and value of communications against business objectives, to be used as a standard by all practitioners and their employers; we need to quantify profession’s contribution to GDP and economy; reputation should be identified as balance sheet asset (separated out from goodwill); measurement training should become a core part of CIPR/PRCA/University training; there should be one agreed measurement score for the industry, focused more on outcomes; there remains a need to develop and implement an industry standard for evaluation, to be adapted to different scenarios/challenges/objectives. It should emerge from consultation with business leaders; public relations evaluation should be built into business auditing activities; the industry should work with monitoring and evaluation agencies to develop standards for evaluation; measurement should be a driver of improvement and success; we need to set measureable objectives (more numeracy); there is a need to invest in measurement; there should be more and better tool-kits, and greater awareness of those available; the CIPR should commission/develop new ways of measuring impact, and should take responsibility for getting key industry players together to inform and shape these; we need to clarify measurement and evaluation to demonstrate real value.

Codes of conduct need strengthening

22. There is a need for stronger codes (of conduct and of ethics) and understanding of these; lack of self regulation may need to regulation; there is a need to strengthen codes, revisit ethical questions; the practice needs to be clean, honest and ethical, and chartered status very important; there should be one global ethical code.

Practitioners need to develop knowledge and ownership of digital communications

23. Practitioners need to develop knowledge and ownership of digital communications; new tools need to be assessed against media requirements and the coverage they offer; social media guidelines will require frequent updating; social media training should become a core part of CIPR/PRCA/University training; the public relations industry should end the debate on ownership of social media and move on to strategy regarding their use.

Need for better definition of what public relations is, and is to achieve

24. There remains a need for better definition of what public relations as a practice is meant to achieve – what is public relations and what is it to do?; public relations should be more proactive, rather than be forced into situations; there is a need to re-evaluate definitions of the practice, roles and codes of conduct; public relations has to be shown to be intrinsic throughout the organization, establishing a culture of communication and customer care at all levels. This requires a cultural change, to be led by us (communicators); there must be buy-in from the top down, which means taking part in a conversation about where the organization is going; priorities and focus must be set from above to allow public relations and communications to be more strategic; development of public relations tactics should be creative and cost-effective -- no gloss, no gimmicks – just results that affect reputation; public relations is not a communication practice, but one that makes use of communication – do we need to rebrand the practice?; ‘public relations’ as a term should be scrapped, to provide a clean slate for communicators, lose the historic stigma, help foster respect, and open new business opportunities; we need to develop a clear articulation of the definition of public relations and reputation management and get consensus on this from a broad spectrum of the profession; boards should have public relations professionals; public relations needs to stop questioning itself and debating its own position – it is itself and clear about what it is, but it also needs to re-invent itself, promote itself and educate as to what it involves; public relations needs to claim its place in marketing communications – “occupy the land;” public relations is content creation – not at all media relations, it is brand and reputation building; there is a need to re-examine and clarify the term public relations; there are needs for understanding of public relations, public relations for public relations, and new ways to communicate the value of public relations; it must be recognized that public relations goes beyond media relations – it is strategic, part of objective setting right at the outset in decision-making and planning; public relations is more than the application of journalistic skills.

Public relations practice has to understand and embrace change

25. To stay on the cutting edge, there need to be ways of sharing best practice and the practice needs to embrace a new generation of talent; public relations practice has to understand and embrace change – we must continue to learn, through constant re-education; how will public relations stay on top of developments – how will the CIPR, consultancy management, encourage the discipline to stay current?; how will public relations deal with convergence – of communications, advertising and marketing agencies – and maintain share of resources allocated to advertising and public relations?; public relations should not be scared of innovation – should take control of this and experiment; it is up to us, as practitioners, to educate clients and others.

Industry bodies need to commit to research and development

26. Industry bodies need to commit to research and development, carrying out research into new methods. These efforts should be headed by industry leaders; there should research and investment in the development of new technology, in-house expertise (we know the tools, but can we invent them?); There should be collaboration with the IT industry to tap into skills and innovations that allow us to lead in the area of social media.

Need for more collaboration with education

27. There is a need for more collaboration with further and higher education; there need to be better links between practice and the academic study of public relations.

Synchronize experience and fresh talent

28. We need to synchronize experience and fresh talent; we should celebrate young people in practice.

Improve practice in government

29. In government, there is a need to work for a clearer separation of political communication and government information work, since confusion of the two has had a negative impact on public relations.

New approaches to relations with the media

30. Improvements are necessary in discussions with the media; there is a need for a greater public understanding of how the media and public relations work together, through media studies education; public relations should help journalists to keep the media industry thriving; the relationship between advertising and public relations should be improved to gain editorial coverage.

Appreciate and respond to national differences

31. Scotland should not be ignored, as a country

32. Practice will evolve differently in Wales – there is an emphasis on ethics in practice and training. The Welsh Assembly is subject to public scrutiny, and the Welsh media are enfeebled. There is a growth in popular action, directed at a more accessible assembly. The Welsh language and culture are sources of action. Wales is a ‘network of networks’ with active voluntary organizations and participation in these. New media are fostering links among the networks. In-house practitioners don’t see themselves as ‘public relations practitioners,’ taking other titles. There are few HQs in Wales, and less separate spend on public relations.

Closer work with human resources

33. There is a need for closer work with human resources on job roles and requirements.

Follow up planning exercises

34. There must be follow-ups to exercises like this!

Additional comments

Group 1 (of two in Aberdeen) realized in discussion that examining public relations and its better integration with other areas of marketing assumed that public relations is a part of marketing. They broadened their discussion to look at public relations as a practice that should be integrated with marketing and other areas of management.

In round-table discussion in the first Greater London session, reference was made to Philip Sheldrake’s view of ‘influence professionals,’ with public relations practitioners being one group within a larger group of such professionals. A view was also offered of the importance of the ‘hacking’ scandal, which is in some ways beneficial to public relations practice, because it shows that practitioners are influential.

In Birmingham’s discussion of scenarios and recommendations, evaluation was seen as a ‘running thread.’ The challenge in measurement and evaluation is how to measure changes in behaviour. There remains a need to educate business leaders on how public relations can help the bottom line.

The Midlands group also asked – “Are we fearful of the best case scenario?” Working towards the best case scenario means becoming transparent, accountable and better at what we do.

Two questions from the second Greater London group: would legislation for the profession be beneficial (governing, for example, public affairs or internal communications practice)? By 2020, will public relations be anti-democratic or pro-democracy?

One of the groups in Bristol compared public relations to bookselling. For booksellers, there is the prospect that supermarkets like Tesco sell books, and bookshops selling books compete with the supermarkets, and with specialist stores – like fishing shops – that also sell books. In a worst case scenario, bookshops go out of business. Public relations has to be like the best bookshop – specialist, complete, knowledgeable, a point of reference for all interested in books, and indispensable.