

Engineering Perception – Part 1

By Steve Schuster, CEO

“Creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge,” is a definition of which term?

- A) Engineering
- B) Public Relations
- C) Both

According to The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a global entity that assesses the impact of science, technology, and innovation, the answer is A. *But the true answer is C, both.*

Engineering = Creating Something New

Engineering is often synonymous with “invention,” and it’s fully accepted that inventions can take time. R&D is the process by which we engineer innovative, new products, and we are comfortable viewing the R&D phase of a new invention as a long-term investment that pays huge financial returns many months or even years down the road.

Public Relations = Creating Something New

Likewise, when we engineer market perception and market behavior with PR, we are also creating something new. We are planting new ideas, thoughts, and concepts, all of which create the perception of need in the market for what your company brings to the market. *Change perception and you change behavior.*

That’s why for every technology company, PR is a crucially important engineering function. That’s right, PR is an engineering function.

Like engineering:

- PR is an educational process designed to increase knowledge about your company among the decision-making target audience.
- PR investments might rank future performance & returns at a higher priority level than short-term profits.
- And like a good, results-driven engineering effort, PR must be a sustained, program level effort with well-understood objectives.

PR is a program, a process, a methodology aimed at **molding and shaping the way people think**. It is equally as deliberate, planned, objective-based, and action-and-result oriented as R&D.

R&D is the first step in engineering a new invention. You may be surprised to know that the PR process should begin *before* the R&D phase is complete.

As a matter of fact, the act of engineering market perception often has a great deal of value *long* before product R&D is completed. Many technology companies make the mistake of waiting until after they finish engineering their products before beginning their market-engineering (PR) programs.

PR planning and budgeting belong in the *earliest stages* of every technology company's business plan. And PR must be created and executed with a program level approach that deliberately engineers changes in *market perception*, and consequently engineers changes in *market behavior*.

[Steve Schuster](#) is CEO of [Rainier Communications](#), a leading U.S. technology-marketing agency that has been the creative force behind hundreds of PR campaigns for a wide variety of high-tech innovations from Fortune 500 to start-up companies. With BSEE and MBA degrees, Schuster served in various management-level roles throughout the high-tech industry. He launched Rainier in 1993 with a vision of providing technology companies with a credible resource for communicating "complex" technologies to the marketplace.

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