



## Look At This Book: The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of PR

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Public relations are essential for school districts in the 21st century – and authors Al Ries and Laura Ries would say far more effective than advertising. *The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of PR* follows a path as predictable as the title; a discussion of the fall of advertising, building a case for the rise of PR, and finally a dissection of the differences between the two.

While the attack on advertising is interesting, the meat of the book begins about 50 pages in when the authors state their hypothesis; “Marketing deals with perceptions. To run a successful advertising or public relations program, you have to create more than talk value. You have to deal with those nasty perceptions . . . Publicity or PR is a more effective way to deal with those perceptions.”

There are actually some educational examples included in the book; however, they are all focused at the college level. However, throughout the book, and especially in the section about the rise of PR, there are useful ideas for anyone involved in public relations. One idea that should resonate strongly in the K-12 setting is that advertising can only be a reminder, it cannot be the argument. Ries & Ries go on to say that the reminder function is important, but only after you have established credibility in other ways, generally by public relations. How often has a millage campaign been defeated because the district has failed to establish credibility with the voters?

Another idea for K-12 schools comes from an example in the book citing the AARP – the American Association of Retired People. In the process of trying to change peoples’ perceptions of the AARP, Ries & Ries point out that “No publicity, no change of perception. It is as simple as that.” They go on to counsel that the solution to a PR problem is invariably a single, simple focus. How many districts send out dozens of messages, and wonder why the public does not understand? The authors caution that it takes fortitude to keep your focus narrowly targeted. They say the biggest mistake you can make is to try to broaden your appeal when you should be trying to “deepen” it.

If your work involves public relations to any degree, you will find *The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of PR* an interesting and thought-provoking book – that may inspire and invigorate your efforts.



Source: Ries, Al, and Laura Ries. *The Fall of Advertising and the Rise of PR*. New York: Harper Collins, 2002.