



## Communications: The four essential steps to best practice

By Shelly Farr Biswell,  
Editor

While I am fortunate enough to be the editor of *Public Sector* journal, my day job is as a communications consultant for various public and non-governmental organisations. What other communications professionals and I have often discussed is the need for a guide for communications advisors within the New Zealand context. Fortunately, that guide has just been published. *Communications: The four essential steps to best practice* is a considered and practical how-to guide by well-respected communications professional Patricia Donovan.

The book is full of useful information for communications professionals no matter where they are on their career path – from recent graduates to seasoned veterans. It's also a handy reference tool for managers and others with an interest in getting the most from communications, stakeholder engagement and reputation management.

Donovan has had a lengthy career in communications both in the public and private sectors. In this book, she has distilled what she has learned over the years into four steps:

- have the right attitude
- think strategically
- act like a leader
- work systematically.

Her insights into each of these steps are helpful and include how-to approaches to take what you learn and put it into action.

The book is also confirmation that good communications – and good communications advisors – play an important role in any organisation. As she notes in her introduction: “Never think of communications as ‘business as usual’, doing this year what you did last year. It isn’t. Best-practice communications are both transactional and transformational. To be effective, you must be strategic: always thinking ahead, challenging the norm, coming up with new ways of doing things.”

Several years ago I had the privilege of working for Donovan at a government ministry. I learned to value her principled approach to communications and her ability to quickly and methodically assess an issue before determining the best course of



Patricia Donovan,  
author of  
*Communications: The  
four essential steps to  
best practice.*

action. For that reason, it gives me great pleasure to see that through this publication she can introduce others to many of the same lessons I learned from her.

As Richard Stone, Executive Chair, JacksonStone and Partners says about the book, “One of the most pragmatic and comprehensive references I’ve seen and an excellent resource for those who recognise the importance of communication and reputation management”.

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