

2010's top PR stories

PHILADELPHIA, US: A survey of public relations professionals around the globe indicates that the BP Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico and the October rescue of the trapped Chilean miners ranked as the top PR stories of 2010.



Members of the [Public Relations Global Network \(PRGN\)](#), an international association of independent communications agencies, agreed it was the ongoing drama of the two crises that kept interest level high throughout the world and provided ideal examples of communications managed perfectly well and horribly wrong.

Bouquets and brickbats

"The BP oil spill commanded an international audience for several months because it had so many different aspects, each more dramatic than the next: environmental disaster, economic hardship in New Orleans, international intrigue and corporate responsibility," said John Echeveste, partner of [VPE Public Relations](#) in Los Angeles, CA. "The story played out on an international stage and serves as a classic PR case study of how not to manage a major international disaster."

The surveyed executives noted that a world desperate for positive news helped fuel the drama of the story of the trapped Chilean miners; the happy ending heightened interest in the story, as viewers around the globe watched as each miner emerged safely from 70 days of captivity underground. "This was essentially an 'old-fashioned' disaster played out against a real-time, round-the-clock, 21st century news storm," said Frank Cullen, chief executive of [Cullen Communications](#) in Dublin, Ireland. Uwe Schmidt of Hamburg, Germany's [Industrie-Contact](#) agency agrees: "People all around the world were emotionally touched. This put the whole country on the global map and raised tremendously Chile's image on a global level."

Shaping the future

The BP oil spill and Chilean miner rescue demonstrated the international appeal as well as the extent and depth of media coverage of regional stories. While one group shunned the press and offered limited access to the media, the other openly shared details and invited global participation and assistance. The BP and Chile images will be shaped for decades solely on how they managed the crises of 2010.

Other stories near the top of the list included the Haitian earthquake, the continuing global economic crisis and the Icelandic volcano eruption in April that halted most air travel within, to, and from Europe for several days.

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