

**Maj. Gen. Keith L. Ware  
Public Affairs Competition  
2011 Judging Guide**

*Revised December 2011*

# Community Relations

*You're judging the effectiveness of the programs and their value to units, commands, Soldiers, Army Civilians, Family members and the Army as a whole. Bear in mind programs will differ significantly in scope, type, emphasis and resources. Allow some flexibility as you assess the value of products, evidence of success and testimonials: each program and contributor will differ in aim and emphasis. Quality is more important than quantity: don't confuse the scale of the "document dump" with the value of the entry.*

## Individual Category:

### Support materials

- What is the value of support materials (letters of recommendation, news clippings brochures, videos, posters, etc.)?
- To what extent do the materials, in fact, demonstrate and reflect the individual's contributions to effective Community Relations efforts?

### Approaches/contributions

- How much did the individual's efforts support one or more Community Relations events?
- How effective were the individual's contributions in relation to resources (personnel, budget, supporting agencies)?
- How successful was the individual in achieving objectives?
- How significant was personal initiative to the outcome?

### Effectiveness

- How much did the program foster good Community Relations?
- How much did the program increase public awareness?
- To what extent did the program inspire patriotism, cultivate a positive image of the command and enhance the prestige of the Army and the military service?
- How much, if at all, did the program support recruiting efforts?

## Special Event

### Research

- How thorough and relevant was the research?
- Did the research reflect a genuine need?
- Evaluate the research methods used to develop the program.

### Planning

- Did the planning reflect research findings?
- Were the objectives measurable and clearly defined?
- How well did the objectives support the organization's goals?

- How thorough was the plan?

### **Execution**

- How efficient and effective was execution of the program relative to resources?

### **Evaluation**

- To what extent were the objectives achieved?
- How thorough and relevant was analysis?

### **Effectiveness**

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- How much did the program increase public awareness?
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# Print journalism

*Editing software, input from editors and supervisors and/or rigorous unit and command level competition generally prevent egregious material from reaching judges' desks or computer screens. Excerpts adapted from the DINFOS grading guide are available for reference below, but generally speaking your role is to recognize excellence, not to "grade" papers like an entry-level instructor. Obvious mechanical errors detract enormously from the credibility and effect of stories, publications, electronic products and photographs alike; so an entry is unlikely to survive many of them. More often, you'll weigh the relative merits of fundamentally sound entries. The grading criteria provide structure, but you'll necessarily render subjective judgments; in fact, your value to the program lies precisely in the experience, wisdom and depth of understanding you bring to your evaluations.*

**Categories A-D (newspapers, newsletters and magazines)** – These unit categories embody all elements and qualities comprising the product, including headlines, teasers, captions, graphic elements and special features as well as stories and photographs. "Content" includes the quality, relevance and substantive merits of stories and supporting elements. "Professional Excellence" includes all qualities contributing to the dignity, prestige and credibility of the product. To what extent does a publication meet internal information objectives? Consider the relevance of a product's content to the command and community. Material addressing substantive local issues generally supports those objectives better than generic "filler" material, for instance. Effective layouts are aesthetically pleasing and adhere to fundamental principles of design, including proportionality, consistency and unity. Inconsistent spacing, poor color scheme, random or confusing patterns, disproportion (headlines or visuals too large for the text they support, for example) and colliding elements detract from design quality. Headlines are important design elements as well as vehicles for advertising content and conveying information.

**Category E (Web-based Publication)** – A solid entry should establish a clear identity as an electronic publication. The SOP warns against submitting "electronic copies of print products." Most substantive and design criteria overlap those of print publications. A Web-based publication should also feature solid reporting on substantive local issues, proportionate, aesthetically pleasing designs and content that reflects command priorities. But judges should consider unique electronic qualities as well. To what extent has the organization created an attractive, timely, interactive, readily navigated product with appeal beyond the existing print CI core audience?

**Categories F-H (new media, blog and Website)** – These categories encompass the least conventional media and hence require the most creative thinking in evaluation. The grading criteria are necessarily general and include no standard substantive formula for

success. The best CI social media simultaneously support command and Army communication priorities, provide an attractive interactive forum for the command community, generate interest in the organization and the Army, and encourage participation. Several of these goals are in tension; evaluating social media achievements requires flexibility and openness to unconventional techniques. Websites should be registered with HQDA. The registration status is available at <http://www.army.mil/media/socialmedia/>

**Category I (News Article)** – Bear in mind most “news” entries will include more detail and narrative than a barebones press release. The mere absence of obvious mechanical flaws does not equate to journalistic excellence. Consider the degree of skill, literary precision and creativity demonstrated in the lead, body, transitions and conclusion. Consider the strength of story and source selection as well as quality of word choice, description and blend of quoted materials in assessing the entries. How valuable is it to the CI audience?

**Categories J-L (features)** – Note submissions are now divided by feature type. News Features need a substantive news peg as well as strong writing mechanics and effective story-telling. Human Interest Features cover the broadest range of subject matter – potentially virtually anything relevant to primary audiences. They should not include a news peg – which would make the story a news feature. Army journalism students are taught to include a personal anecdote and secondary interviews with two sources familiar with the subject of a Personality Feature. Strong Personality Feature submissions will include these elements, along with rich detail and effective description. Allow some creative license in judging features. Ideally, Army journalists strive to meet command information objectives and communicate material in the most compelling manner, not follow a rigid formula. Skilful judges understand the difference between a literary device consciously employed for effect and a mechanical error. As with News Articles, consider the quality of interviews, source selection, writing and story-telling, and value to the audience as well as the prevalence or absence of mechanical mistakes.

**Category M (Commentary)** – By definition, commentaries tend toward the polemical, so allow some leeway in “objectivity” standards. Ideas communicated in the commentaries should support command and Army information objectives; but avoid evaluating on the basis of how compelling you consider the idea or argument advanced. A well written, persuasively presented commentary advocating a position you disagree with should score higher than a less-well argued commentary you agree with.

**Category N (Sports Article)** – Sports reporting generally covers less controversial material and often relates only indirectly to command communication priorities. Allow some latitude for colorful and creative approaches to sports coverage and bear in mind identification standards differ for game stories. Until the curriculum eliminated game stories, DINFOS instructors taught students to identify players by team and position rather than rank, job description and unit.

**Category O (Story Series)** – One or more coherent underlying themes should unite

stories in a well-conceived series. Consider how well the stories in the series support each other and an identifiable CI objective as well as the quality of each individual piece on its own terms.

**Categories P, Q, R and S (photojournalism)** – Story text, captions and imagery combine to form a unique medium. These elements complement, support and reinforce each other in effective photojournalism. Consider how effectively images and words communicate a story as well as the poignancy of the pictures(s). Evaluate the pictures in terms of their story telling and CI function as well as their focus, composition, creativity and poignancy. Pay attention to context when evaluating captions. A “skeleton” or deliberately terse caption may be more effective and appropriate than an elaborate “extended outline” when accompanying a story. Captions ideally complement, rather than reiterate, a full-length story. So don’t automatically punish a photojournalist for a short caption or reward the producer for a comprehensive one. The picture page category deliberately encourages collaboration and teamwork, so don’t penalize unit entries including a variety of contributors.

**Categories T and U (stringer contributions)** – Judge stringer submissions the same way you would assess entrants in analogous story writing and photojournalism categories. Most CI stringers are members of the military community; indeed, many are accomplished staff officers and DA civilians serving in other career fields and may have more writing experience than junior 46Qs. They also receive the same support from the editorial chain as PA professionals. Stringer stories require no special concessions

**Categories V-X (journalists of the year)** – Consider accomplishments and qualities identified in supporting materials as well as the products submitted in support of these packets. The “Journalist of the Year” should contribute heavily to the team, the command and the Army, and embody the qualities of an outstanding Soldier or Army Civilian as well as write good copy or take compelling pictures.

### ***Catalogue of errors adapted from the DINFOS grading guide***

**Attribution:** The contestant should properly attribute any direct or indirect quote. Observations require no attribution but should be supported by empirical evidence.

**Clarity:** If the meaning of text is not apparent to the reasonable reader, writing creates unintended or detrimental ambiguity, or a story leaves obvious lingering questions, lack of clarity may be a problem.

**Error in fact:** A factual error pertaining directly to the news peg or the focus of the story seriously jeopardizes the credibility of the story and its author. Reporting that misstates essential facts is frankly inconsistent with success in a credible journalism competition.

**Identification:** Stories should include the correct rank (if appropriate), unit, job title and organization as well as service when ambiguous.

**Inaccurate attribution:** You obviously won't have access to entrants' interview notes or recordings, but you've been around the game long enough to smell obvious shifts in sources, word choices and implausible quotes. If a Pashtun tribal chieftain's observations read like theater Public Affairs Guidance the reporter may have contracted selective hearing syndrome.....

**Lack of or weak focus:** The focus is the main theme to a story, and it should be maintained throughout the article. A story without strong focus may wander from one subject to the next and leave the reader asking, "What is this story about?"

**No variety:** A skillful writer should alternate word use, sentence and paragraph length, structure and opening words, and avoid repetitive prose.

**Omission:** Occurs when an essential part of a story is missing. If a story on combined training lacks any reporting on the role of the allied force(s) or a change of command story neglects the outgoing commander, significant omission has occurred.

**Policy:** Stories violating command or service policy (inappropriate political content, advocacy or unnecessary use of brand names, for instance) should not win CI awards.

**Propriety:** Stories that should not be published in a military outlet due to inappropriate subject matter, improper language or unacceptable style or tone should not be considered for Keith L. Ware awards.

**Redundancy:** Repetition employed to avoid additional research, avert mistakes, pad story length or forestall the need for creativity is inconsistent with journalistic excellence.

**Security:** Stories compromising security are obviously inconsistent with commanders' intent and success in the competition.

**Unauthorized or non-credible source:** Employment of a clearly unqualified source. If a writer relies solely on a junior enlisted mechanic for judgments on U.S. prospects in Iraq, for instance, he's obviously using a comfortable interview subject in lieu of an expert.

**Weak feature conclusion:** The reader shouldn't be left with an abrupt ending or a feeling that somehow the ending was cut from the story. The conclusion must not leave the reader wondering what the story was about. Just as the lead gives the reader an idea of what the story is about, the conclusion confirms, restates or provides perspective on an idea. Obviously, not every story will include a riveting conclusion, but each should entail a conscious strategy. No conclusion is a weak conclusion.

**Weak feature lead:** A feature lead should attract the reader's attention, give him an idea what the story is about, and compel him to continue. Not every story will include a powerful lead that grips each reader; but each lead should accomplish its minimal functional goals and avoid awkwardly employed clichés and inappropriate humor.

**Weak lead emphasis:** Lead fails to emphasize the most important information.

**Weak news lead:** A lead that omits important information, fails to communicate the gist of the story or includes an inordinate amount of extraneous or irrelevant material. Since you'll typically evaluate news features and not straightforward news releases, don't impose a rigid "5Ws" standard on all submissions. But the substance of the lead should reflect the substance, focus and tone of the story.

**Wordiness:** Occurs when three or more total words can be deleted from any sentence, or the entire sentence can be deleted. Wordiness often coincides with passive constructions and/or unnecessary articles, conjunctions and prepositions.

**Wrong news peg:** The writer chooses an inappropriate focus. If a reporter covers an important engagement of international leaders and the resulting story focuses on the security detail, transportation or food served during the luncheon he may have selected an inappropriate news peg.

**Wrong word:** The writer employs the wrong word for the idea he or she is attempting to communicate. This occurs frequently in prepositions, homophones, homonyms and pronouns (ie officer "core" rather than "corps," "but" for "and" when the context suggests no contradiction or "there" rather than "their" for the plural possessive).

## ***Mechanical errors***

**Date week:** A date week error occurs when a writer inappropriately uses a day for date or vice versa. It also occurs when the writer includes both (unless done for effect).

**Grammar – the following is a suggestive but by no means comprehensive list of potential grammatical errors:**

- Pronoun-antecedent disagreement often takes the form of using their instead of its – "General Motors said their price ...," instead of "General Motors said its ..."
- Verb tense problems occur when a writer uses present tense instead of past tense – "He use to be my friend ..." instead of "He used to be my friend..."
- Using the incorrect attributive verb tense, using "said" for "says" and vice versa.
- Homophone and homonym problems are grammar problems.
- Subject-verb agreement and predicate-verb agreement such as, "The sergeant major and the commandant is both away;" and "Dollars is flowing ..." are grammar problems.
- Using double negatives. "He said none would not go on the trip."
- Using "that" for "who" when referring to people and vice versa are grammar errors. "Fred is the one that did it." Note, however, "that" may be used to refer to a group or class of people – ie "the team that ..."

- When a writer connects two sentences with a comma without a coordinating conjunction, he has written a run-on sentence.
- Sentence fragments, in which a sentence is missing a subject or a verb, are grammar errors unless used in dialogue or otherwise for effect.
- Parallel construction problems occur quite often. For example: “In studying his options, Jones looked to the future and at the past.” Should read: “In studying his options, Jones looked to the future and to the past.” Perhaps the most common nonparallel construction deals with “ing,” “He found himself looking into her eyes and wondered if there were any hope,” for instance. Should read: “He found himself looking into her eyes and wondering if there was any hope.”
- Misplaced modifiers like “the woman in the black dress, strikingly beautiful” (actually modifies “dress” rather than “woman”) or “the Green Bay Packers took the field as the crowd roared wearing home colors” (should read “the Green Bay Packers, wearing home colors, took the field....”).
- If the describing phrase describes the subject or the sentence as a whole, it needs to be preceded by a comma.
  - He nailed a line drive to center field, bringing home Lewis and Clark. If there is no comma, the example would mean "center field is bringing Lewis and Clark home."
  - The director chose the actor smiling broadly.
  - The director chose the actor, smiling broadly.

Without the comma, the meaning of the modifying phrase is misplaced.
- Dangling participles are infamous grammatical errors. “Running at full speed, the ball was caught near the right field wall.” The ball was running at full speed?

**Punctuation:** Examples include missing or misplaced punctuation marks, including misused apostrophes, periods, colons or semicolons. Good writers seldom commit glaringly obvious omissions in published work, but they may well employ extraneous commas, use colons inappropriately or mishandle rhetorical questions (examples: “so why bother, he thought” or “they left the briefing thinking the same thing: what did that accomplish.”)

**Stylebook:** Material should conform to AP style unless superseded by a local stylebook furnished by the command. Military writers frequently mishandle acronyms, jargon and casing, capitalizing generic job titles purely for effect or employing unexplained military slang, for instance. Make allowance for service-directed policies such as capitalization of the “s” in “Soldier” or the “f” in “Army Families.”

## *Design issues*

**Alignment:** Offset or poorly aligned headlines, art, copy, etc.

**Spacing:** Relationship or separation of design elements.

**Bumping:** Includes headlines, artwork or boxes (generally occurs when placing modules

side-by-side); art or photo overlaps copy or headlines.

**Photo cropping:** Feet or hands cropped, too much clutter, poor shaping, etc.

**Design – A partial, but by no means exhaustive, list of potential design problems:**

- “Dog-leg” modules
- “L” or “7” shaped modules
- Headlines placed over unrelated elements
- Alleys not same width within a module
- An off balance page
- Story columns, copy or outlines too wide or narrow for readability
- Using ragged right for news story or justified for feature story
- Headlines that are too short or too long (they should come ½ way through the last column of the module)
- A photograph or any artwork too large or too small for the material it supports
- The photograph or artwork action leads off the page
- Photograph or artwork separates the byline (or the lead) from the headline
- Not placing most important story on top of page
- Using the wrong size/font/format of type
- “Sticks” of copy laid out in the wrong order

**Headline errors:** These include failure to use downstyle, padding, failure to use historical present tense for news headlines, headlines too long or too short for the text they support, misspellings and clarity problems.

**Pulled quote abuse:** Pulled quotes are important design elements as well as vehicles for conveying dynamic observations. They should be poignant, appropriate in length, enticing to the reader and worded exactly the same as the passage in the body.

**Rules (boxes and lines):** They should be consistent, proportionate and appropriate to the elements they support. Boxes and lines should be employed judiciously and sparingly to separate distinct elements, usually in the absence of supporting imagery.

**Tabs:** Frequent errors include paragraphs not indented, or inconsistent indents within a story or page.

## ***Photojournalism***

**Action:** Entries should display strong action appropriate to the subject matter at hand. Inaction, weak action, hidden action, action out of frame and posed action (an expedient adopted all too frequently in Army journalism) detract from the quality of a photograph.

**Camera movement:** Shooting at slow shutter speeds, unsteady camera grip and poor shooting technique can produce blurry images or poor focus.

**Composition:** Composition errors include, but are not limited to, cluttered foreground or background, cutting off of essential body parts, inclusion of objects apparently “growing out of heads,” extraneous appendages in the frame, wrong format, too much extra space and inappropriate distance from the subject.

**Exposure:** Exposure mistakes may result in “whitewashed” or inappropriately dark photos, poor color and “blown out” highlights. Army photojournalists tend to employ automatic settings; but the best photographers will effectively manage camera settings, ambient light and flash to achieve proper exposure.

**Flash technique:** Shadows should fall behind the subject’s head. Good photographers will tend to employ indirect flash and more sophisticated technique, producing balanced lighting and an appropriate level of illumination.

**Focus:** Good photographers select and capture an appropriate focal point and achieve a consciously crafted level of focus for the subject matter at hand. An ideal action photo of a rifleman in action, for instance, might focus on the Soldier’s eyes and face with the body and foreground remaining relatively crisp and the background somewhat blurred. The subject matter should inform expectations. A close-up taken in a garrison environment should achieve intense and dominant focus on the subject’s eyes; allow greater tolerance for a long-distance shot of a rapidly moving object.

**Unpublishable image (content):** A photograph rendered unpublishable by its violation of policy, propriety or security shouldn’t be considered for positive recognition in an Army CI competition.

## Broadcast journalism

*A large proportion of Army broadcast journalists who consistently generate CI product is based overseas. A large share of submissions emanates from AFN affiliates in Europe and Korea. Defense Media Activity personnel based in the National Capital Region also contribute a relatively large share of products. Broadcast journalists serving “downrange” in support of operational deployments also generate large quantities of product. Paradoxically, a relatively small share of the submissions will cover activities on the large U.S. installations served by the most prominent CI newspapers. The largest tactical broadcast organizations, moreover, are based in the Reserve Component. Astute judges may notice a decided overseas skew to broadcast submissions overall and a slight RC skew in “downrange” submissions.*

**Categories A-G (radio)** – Experienced broadcasters and PA professionals will readily perceive the hallmarks of effective radio. Voice quality, delivery and creativity distinguish professional broadcasters in the Army as in any other organization. Consider the CI relevance and impact as well as talent, energy, technical mastery and

entertainment value when evaluating news products.

**Categories H-O (television)** – Television categories are comprehensive and potentially challenging for judges. Imagination, ingenuity and story, shot and interview selection – not to mention camera work, script writing, editing and announcing – contribute heavily to the quality of TV product. Indeed, physical courage may impact the quality of video obtained in dangerous theaters. In addition to this, judges must consider impact, effectiveness and, in many cases, contribution to the CI mission. Bear in mind many AFN products and campaigns are command directed. This cultivates CI relevance but at the expense of creative license and initiative. Try devising a way to lecture young Soldiers on reflector belt use or education while employing pet command clichés and senior leader input without chasing the target demographic back into the barracks.....

**Category P (Command Information Campaign)** – Although this is a broadcast category, consider the quality of print and electronic as well as broadcast products generated in support of the campaign. Consider the impact, effectiveness and value of the campaign as well as its products. Reward teams that communicated important command-driven messages in a dynamic, powerful manner more richly than those that generated the greatest volume of video, CI copy and glossy brochures.

**Categories Q-S (broadcast journalists of the year)** – Consider accomplishments and qualities identified in supporting materials as well as the products submitted in support of these packets. The “Broadcast Journalist of the Year” should contribute heavily to the team, the command and the Army, and embody the qualities of an outstanding Soldier or Army Civilian as well as shoot good video, edit well and enunciate clearly.

**Categories T-V (deployed products)** – These categories were created to recognize the efforts of producers working in relatively austere environments in support of important real-world operations. In practical terms, most deployed materials come from Soldiers serving with operational units “downrange” rather than personnel assigned to AFN billets. Bear in mind, however, that “deployed” circumstances vary widely. “Deployed” Army broadcasters may produce most of their material in a state of the art studio located in a highly developed hub or in a lonely outpost manned by a platoon.

### ***Broadcast skills are graded on the following criteria:***

**Audio levels:** Audio levels should be properly adjusted and synchronized.

**Audio quality:** The contestant should apply solid microphone placement technique, producing audio free from distortion and including good natural sound.

**Camera composition:** Shots should be effectively composed.

**Camera movement:** Video should flow naturally and avoid movement.

**Color balance:** Video should be properly white balanced.

**Command information:** Entries should meet commanders' intentions and support CI objectives. If the material doesn't effectively communicate the story of the command, its Soldiers and/or the Army, it doesn't help the service regardless of technical quality.

**Copyright:** All video products must comply with copyright guidelines as noted in the Keith L. Ware Competition SOP.

**Edits:** Edits should be smooth and free of "dirty" edits.

**Effective sequencing:** News pieces should include two or more three-shot sequences; spots should include at least one.

**Focus:** Strong focus is a prerequisite to video excellence.

**Jump cuts:** No jump cuts!

**Lighting:** Video should be appropriately illuminated and free of hot, dark or auto iris shots.

**Music:** Music should reflect the tone and substance of the product and conform to relevant copyright law.

**Opening and closing shots:** These should be strong, well composed and arouse audience interest.

**Pacing:** Shots, sequences and narration should be appropriately paced and edited to complement the product.

**"Pop-ins:"** All shots and sequences should complement each other and avoid "pop-ins" and "pop-outs."

**Sound-bites and stand-ups:** TV News stories should effectively employ sound-bites and stand-ups. Their duration should be commensurate with the length of the story and the importance of the input; accompanying video should not distract the audience. Stand-ups and sound-bites should contribute significantly to the product. Military subjects should adhere to an appropriate standard of wear and appearance of uniform. Extraneous items such as access and security badges, microphones and cords should not appear in video.

**Speaking:** The contestant articulates and enunciates well, does not stumble and pronounces words properly. The contestant should have a solid grasp of the copy and makes effective transitions. He or she should speak with authority and avoid reading.

**Special effects:** Special effects should be aesthetically pleasing and appropriate to the tone and substance of the product they support.

**“180-degree violations:”** These occur when the videographer improperly juxtaposes subject matter. The consequent “flip-flop” makes a sequence appear amateurish or simply leaves viewers wondering “what’s wrong here?”