

What is Public Relations?

Chapter 1



The trade publication PR News developed a widely accepted early definition of public relations: "Public relations is the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and patience."

Public Relations: a challenging career with plenty of variety

- A S.F. PR account executive's "day in the life" illustrates her job's variety: research, writing, advising, media relations, planning...
- Nationally, 350,000 people work in the field (according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- And will grow nearly 40% through 2014, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- PR is most developed in the U.S. which in 2007 had almost 7,000 PR firms with combined annual revenue of \$6 billion.
- In May 2006 Money magazine ranked Public Relations Specialist 20th on its list of "50 Best Jobs" for job opportunity and potential salary
- Globally, there are some 200 national and regional PR associations with a membership of more than 150,000
- In the U.S. in 2005-6 about 34,000 students were majoring in PR, advertising/PR or strategic communications

Worldwide Growth



- PR activities and spending are also growing in Europe and even more so in Asia, particularly China where the economy is growing at the rate of 10 percent annually.
- In China, the 2008 Summer Olympics fueled dynamic PR growth.
- The 2010 Shanghai World Expo is expected to do the same in China
- Global free market economies create a fertile environment for increased public relations activity.

DEFINING PUBLIC RELATIONS

- People often think of PR in terms of its most visible techniques and results: publicity in a newspaper, a TV interview with an organization's spokesperson, or the appearance of a celebrity at a special event.
- PR is a process involving many subtle and far-reaching aspects.
- It includes research and analysis, policy formation, programming, communication, and feedback from numerous publics.

DEFINING PR (cont'd)

- Its practitioners operate on two distinct levels—as advisers to their clients or to an organization's top management and as technicians who produce and disseminate messages in multi-media channels.
- PRSA definition—13 words: “Public relations helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other.”
 - Review key words on page 7: deliberate, planned, performance, public interest, two-way communication, management function.

PR as a Process

- The RACE acronym-- Research, Action, Communication (execution) and Evaluation (p. 8)
- PR is a process, a series of actions, changes, or functions that bring about a result.
- A popular way to describe the process, and to remember its components, is RACE first used in "The Nature of Public Relations" by John Marston.
- Definitions of PR people as "linking agents" and "boundary spanners" who act to transfer information between two systems.

Other terms for Public Relations

- To describe the public relations function within corporations, "corporate communications" is the most common name, according to a survey of the nation's 500 largest corporations, used by 165 companies. "Public relations" used by 64.
- Other names are "public affairs, corporate affairs, corporate relations, and corporate public affairs.
- Social service agencies, universities and government agencies like "public information" or "community relations," names which don't imply the persuasive nature of PR communication. The military likes "public affairs."
- C of C used to use "College Relations" but is now "Marketing and Communications."

Less Flattering Terms and Stereotypes

- “Sex in the City” reference, Samantha, the Kim Cattrall character, owns a PR agency– depiction on glamour, parties, “schmoozing,” no “heavy lifting” or routine functions
- And the old Michael J. Fox series, “Spin City,” as the devious and manipulative, deputy mayor/press secretary--“flak/spin doctor”
- A 1993 study found that PR was consistently equated with “manipulation of the truth to a dubious end” but a more recent study of the media’s portrayal of PR is more favorable...



Specific PR jobs and roles

(page 10)

- Counseling
- Research
- Media relations
- Publicity
- Employment/
member/investor
relations
- Community relations
- Public affairs
- Government affairs
- Issues management
- Financial relations
- Industrial relations
- Development/fund-
raising
- Special events
- Marketing
communications
- Multicultural
relations/workplace
diversity

THE RANGE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS WORK

- Major areas of PR work include:

- Corporations (private and public) 34%
- Nonprofits/Foundations 19%
- Public relations firms 17%
- Government (all levels) 10%
- Educational institutions 8%
- Independent consulting 8%
- Health care 1%
- Professional associations 1%
- Other 2%

Publicists and Press Agents: What's the Diff? (p. 12)

- Publicists deal exclusively with placement of stories in the media.
- Press agents are also specialists who concentrate on finding unusual news angles and planning events or "happenings" that attract media attention.

HOW PR DIFFERS FROM JOURNALISM, ADVERTISING, MARKETING (p. 16-20)

- These are important distinctions to make and understand
 - Journalism and PR differ in scope, objective, audience and channels- journalism serves the public, and PR services clients/causes
 - Advertising is paid for; PR utilizes “free media” opportunities and outlets
 - Marketing is concerned with customers and selling products and services; PR is concerned with building relationships and generating goodwill for the organizations

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS (IMC) (p.20-22)

- The trend is toward more comprehensive planning involving a variety of communication disciplines—PR, advertising, marketing, sales promotion, direct response—and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact.

Reasons for IMC trend

- Downsizing and reengineering of organizations—many have combined departments and reduced staff dedicated to various communication disciplines...meaning one department, fewer employees, expected to do a greater variety of communication tasks
- Marketing and Communications Departments are making do with tighter budgets.
- To avoid the high cost of advertising many organizations look for alternative ways to deliver messages
- These may include: building buzz by word of mouth; targeting “influentials;” Web marketing; grassroots marketing; media relations and product publicity; and event sponsorship

Five Essential Abilities (p.25)

- Writing skills
- Research ability
- Planning expertise
- Problem-solving ability
- Business/economics competence



10 QUALITIES THAT EMPLOYERS WANT (page 27)

- Good Writing
- Intelligence
- Cultural Literacy
- Know a good story when you see one
- Media Savvy
- Contacts
- Broad Communication Experience
- Specialized Experience
- Avoid Career Clichés

9 Ways PR Contributes to the Bottom Line (p.24)

- Awareness and information
- Organizational motivation
- Issue anticipation
- Opportunity identification
- Crisis Management
- Overcoming executive isolation
- Change agency
- Social responsibility
- Influencing public policy

On the Job Insights

- Hershey chocolate's 100th anniversary of its popular Kisses—12-foot-high, 30,000 pound Kiss created as a “pseudoevent” and “photo op” to attract media attention (p. 3)
- Bank of America's successful initiative to attract new Hispanic customers— PR campaign created awareness through national news releases, radio and video news releases, staged events, holiday tie ins... (p. 8)
- Awarding winning PR campaigns (p. 13)

FINALLY....

- Take the PR Personality Checklist on page 28!
- See syllabus for homework due next class from this chapter

