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Subject : Fundamentals of PR

Major Assignment

Summary of all the lectures we studied at 6th semester

One thing that must be remembered about Public relations is that; it depends upon image

Public relations (PR) is the practice of deliberately managing the release and spread of information between an individual or an organization (such as a business, government agency, or a non-profit organization) and the public. Public relations (PR) and publicity differ in that PR is controlled internally, whereas publicity is not controlled and contributed by external parties. Public relations may include an organization or individual gaining exposure to their audiences using topics of public interest and news items that do not require direct payment. This differentiates it from advertising as a form of marketing communications. Public relations aims to create or obtain coverage for clients for free, also known as 'earned media', rather than paying for marketing or advertising. But in the 2010s, advertising is also a part of broader PR activities.

An example of good public relations would be generating an article featuring a client, rather than paying for the client to be advertised next to the article. The aim of public relations is to inform the public, prospective customers, investors, partners, employees, and other stakeholders, and ultimately persuade them to maintain a positive or favourable view about the organization, its leadership, products, or political decisions. Public relations professionals typically work for PR and marketing firms, businesses and companies, government, and public officials as public information officers and nongovernmental organizations, and non-profit organizations. Jobs central to public relations include account coordinator, account executive, account supervisor, and media relations manager.

Public relations specialists establish and maintain relationships with an organization's target audience, the media, relevant trade media, and other opinion leaders. Common responsibilities include designing communications campaigns, writing press releases and other content for news, working with the press, arranging interviews for company spokespeople, writing speeches for company leaders, acting as an organisation's spokesperson, preparing clients for press conferences, media interviews and speeches, writing website and social media content, managing company reputation (crisis management), managing internal communications, and marketing activities like brand awareness and event management. Success in the field of public relations requires a deep understanding of the interests and concerns of each of the company's many stakeholders. The public relations professional must know how to effectively address those concerns using the most powerful tool of the public relations trade, which is publicity.

Definition of PR:

"the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organizational leaders and implementing planned programs of action, which will serve both the organization and the public interest."

When it comes to public relations we must know that there are different types of PR and there are also different names for PR.

When it comes to companies and corporations, everyone has an opinion – customers, shareholders, the media, the government and the general public. There are dozens of viewpoints, and almost as many types of PR. Each type has a purpose, and each one suits a different type of professional. Here are some examples to get you started.

Given as bellow;

- media relations
- community relations
- corporate and social responsibility
- public affairs
- crisis management
- social media
- employee relations
- integrated marketing and communications

Media relations

Media relations is all about dealing with the media – writing press releases, scheduling interviews and giving press conferences. The goal is to generate positive coverage of your company or your product. Basically, you want the media to do your advertising for free.

Key to media relations is generating a 'hook' to draw in audiences. You need to have an eye for a compelling story that the media will want to cover. You also need to have the skills to get the story out there, which can vary depending on the role. Copywriters produce snappy, well-written press releases, while company spokespeople stand up and give speeches to the press. In smaller organisations, one person is responsible for everything.

Some stories can be planned in advance. Others must be written at a moment's notice. Media relations people need to be excellent forward planners and also very flexible.

Community relations

Community engagement officers work to develop a company's relationship with the local (and not-so-local) community.

Reasons for doing this include:

1. getting local support for a project, such a building a new manufacturing plant
2. 'giving something back', which improves the company's ethical reputation
3. getting people interested in your products or services
4. changing people's mind-set about an issue

To be a community engagement officer you need to understand how people in the community think and act, and how best to engage with them – whether by running events, visiting schools or writing newsletters. You need to be organised, intuitive, enthusiastic and strategic.

Corporate and social responsibility

Related to community engagement, there is PR that improves the company's reputation for ethics, environmental responsibility, and community and charity works. This area of PR can hugely affect an organisation's business practices. A CSR PR officer might recommend the company to change its entire recycling policy, or even its business direction.

To be a good CSR officer you need the ear of the company leaders – which takes networking skills, people skills, persuasion and the ability to endear yourself to your colleagues.

Public affairs

Public affairs, also known as lobbying, is all about getting the government on your side. Say you wanted a change in farming legislation so you could sell your product for more money. You'd need to make contact with a minister, convince them of your case, and provide them with information so they can talk confidently about your issue and fight your corner.

Public affairs professionals work to make contacts within government and other organisations. They're personable, tenacious, and occasionally sneaky.

Crisis management

Crisis management is the PR you need when disaster strikes: a faulty product has to be recalled, an oil tanker spills, an employee accuses the company of wrongdoing, or the CEO is arrested for public indecency. These things could ruin the company's reputation and need to be dealt with quickly.

Crisis managers are quick thinkers who know how to spin an issue. They can manage teams and delegate tasks. They understand every media channel so they can tell which problems need a press conference and which can be solved with a single tweet.

Crisis management is great for confident people who thrive on adrenaline.

Social media

Many companies use social media campaigns as a form of marketing, but social media also has huge PR potential. Some of a company's greatest PR successes (and disasters) can happen on social media. It's a place where your interactions with a single customer are visible to the whole world. It allows companies to show their lighter side – for example, two fast food chains exchanging friendly Twitter insults. It's also a good place for honest public apologies.

Employee relations:

Also known as internal PR, employee relations is the business of giving employees a positive view of the company they work for. The goal is to keep them satisfied, motivated and loyal.

Employee relations work might include:

1. organising employee events
2. creating internal newsletters and other communications
3. resolving disputes
4. liaising with unions
5. helping line managers develop good relationships with their team

This is perhaps the most sensitive form of PR, as it's based less on image and more on action. For example, in resolving disputes you can only offer as much as the higher-ups in the company will let you – and it's very difficult to put a positive spin on the word 'no'.

Conversely, positive reportage can also enhance the image and reputation of that organisation.

The kind and amount of information disseminated by the media about an individual or organisation, brand, service or product would have a significant role in shaping perceptions.

Information related to business is also a critical component for foreign businesses in deciding to invest in a country.

The media presents a huge opportunity for the organisation to send certain messages about their organisation to the public and other stakeholders. As a result, developing good relations with the media becomes an essential activity.

Paul Argenti, a public relations expert is quoted as saying that the media is both a constituency and a conduit through which investors, suppliers, retailers and consumers receive information about and develop images of the organisation.

Organisations use the media to gain “third-party endorsement”. The conventional wisdom is that information is more credible when conveyed by the media. This lies on the assumption that the media has no vested interest.

VMCZ promotes media professionalism and accountability

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Why media has important role in public relations

The media — the biggest medium through which information flows — is known as the Fourth Estate for a reason. Along with the executive, legislature, and judiciary, they wield so much power because of their influence and impact in the society. Power that evidently unsettles certain quarters.

public relations with Lenox Mhlanga

The media is so powerful such that the negative reportage about an individual or organisation will affect their image or reputation.

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Howes and Sallot assert that the “endorsement effect” is what has motivated public relations (PR) practitioners to consider when developing communication strategies.

There is a long-held view in PR practice that information published or broadcast in news media takes on an added value because it has been approved by an independent third party gatekeeper and conveyed by an independent, supposedly unbiased news medium.

There is the assumption that organisations are biased and guided by a self-interested perspective it wishes to advance.

Coverage by an independent media has greater credibility because there is the possibility that it is fact-based, has been vetted and screened, and that it has not been paid for, which allows for balance and other voices in the story.

However, when talking to PR practitioners in the field, there are things about reporters that keep them up at night. These are reporters who “never let the facts get in the way of the story” through selectively including or excluding information or failing to check the facts.

The polarised and increasingly politicised media environment in Zimbabwe has led to growing mistrust between corporates and reporters.

We can't ignore the fact that the poor working conditions of journalists has led to cases of unethical and downright unprofessional behaviour.

According to one practitioner, there has been an increase in cases of inaccurate reporting, and retractions for lack of fact-checking which has diminished the credibility of media in general.

Yet the fact remains that public relations practitioners cannot do without the media and vice-versa. The media is both an essential tactic and a tool in delivering their mandate.

PR is about creating, promoting and maintaining a favourable image of the organisation among its various audiences and the media becomes a useful ally.

Media relations have over the years become a significant corporate activity and as such, have become a core activity among PR practitioners. It forms a significant component of the communications strategy and it makes a significant contribution to the bottom line through reputation management.

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