

# **Public Relations**

## **Theory and Practice**

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*Compiled by:*  
**EDMOND NG**  
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# Public Relations Theory and Processes

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## TOPIC 1: Defining Public Relations

### Definition

“Public relations is the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics” – IPR Australia

“Public relations is the distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual line of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organisation and its publics” – Harlow (1976)

“To do good, and communicate, forget not” – Hebrews 13:16, cited in Sietel (1992)

Harlow (1976)

- Communication
- Understanding
- Acceptance
- Cooperation
- Management of problems or issues

- Keeps management informed on public opinion
- Defines and emphasises responsibility of management to serve public interest
- Helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilise change
- Serve as early warning system to help anticipate trends
- Use research and sound ethical communication techniques as its principal tools

Barnes, D. (1967)

- Advise management ... on policy and effort of PR
- Channel and coordinate ... activities that affect PR within organisation
- Provide mechanics to explain ... organisation and its policies to its publics through communication media
- Ascertain and explain ... to management what various publics think about the organisation

Seitel (1992)

- Hebrews 13:16
- Doing good itself
- Ethical conduct
- Good deeds may speak for themselves
- Communicate good deeds worthwhile
- Communication – important part of PR

### **Publics**

Publics can be internal or external. A public is a group of people who share interests or concerns, affected by, and affecting organisation or its actions. May be latent/passive

### **PR Functions**

Primary functions:

- To control publics
- To direct what people think or do in order to satisfy the needs and wants of an organisation
- To respond to publics, reacting to developments, problems or initiatives of others
- To achieve mutually beneficial relationships among publics by fostering harmonious interchange (PRSA 1980)

## TOPIC 2: Scope of Public Relations / For and Against Public Relations

### Scope (activities and specialties) of PR Contemporary Practice

Cutlip *et al.* 2000, p.9:

- Publicity
- Advertising
- Press Agency
- Public Affairs
- Issues Management
- Lobby
- Investor Relations
- Development

IPR (UK):

- *Program planning.* Analysing problems and opportunities, defining goals, recommending
- *Writing and editing.* Reports, news releases, brochures, speeches, scripts, publications
- *Media relations.* Developing and maintaining good working contact with media
- *Corporate identity.* Developing and maintaining organisation's name, policies, reputation
- *Speaking.* Communicating effectively with individuals and groups
- *Production.* Liaising and supervising contacts for production of brochures, reports, video, multi-media programs
- *Training.* Preparing executives and designated people in organisation to deal with the media and public appearances.
- *Counselling.* Advising top management on the social political and regulatory environment, how to avoid and respond to crisis, devise strategies
- *Special events.* Organising functions such as news conferences, exhibitions, events, tours and meetings to gain attention and acceptance of groups of people.
- *Research and evaluation.* Gathering information to find out about existing attitudes or perceptions, before putting program of action in place and after activity undertaken, to see whether objectives have been achieved.

Roles and key activities of PR practitioners (Johnston and Zawawi 2000, pp.11-12):

- Communication
- Publicity
- Promotions
- Press agency
- Integrated marketing

- Issues management
- Crisis management
- Press secretary / public information officer
- Public affairs / lobbyist
- Financial relations
- Community relations
- Internal relations
- Industry relations
- Minority relations
- Media relations
- Public diplomacy
- Event management
- Sponsorship
- Cause / relationship marketing
- Fund-raising

Johnston and Zawawi (2000, p.35)

- Media relations
- Sponsorship
- Crisis and issues management
- Shareholder
- Financial relations
- Marketing communications
- Community relations

### **Role of PR Practitioners**

- *Technicians*. Provide services such as producing publications (e.g. news release and newsletter). Technicians hold lower positions within organisations than problem solvers.
- *Problem solvers*. Ask clients or senior management to rethink or clarify problems and to look for innovative solutions (Grunig 1987). Problem solvers belong to management, with responsibility for decision-making and policy formation. They are part of what is known as the dominant coalition of management.

### **Public Relations, Marketing and Advertising**

- ‘Advertising is visibility, public relations is credibility’ (Meter 1999, p.6)
- PR and marketing working together in a campaign would complement each other, both to improve sales and to create a longer-term position in the marketplace

- PR objective is to use information to strengthen the bond between the organisation and the customer – not necessarily to increase sales in the short term, but to engender loyalty, selling more by building commitment over the long term

### **Desirable Skills of PR Practitioners**

- Understanding of PR and communications theory
- Plan and analyse while developing problem solving approach
- Strong technical and communication skills
- Strong relationship/interpersonal skills
- Strong social, political and ethical appreciation, understanding big picture and interconnectedness of events
- Industry knowledge and perspective with knowledge of applications and processes

### **Critical Skills**

- Vocational skills in research, writing, listening, presentation and media
- Relationship skills – interpersonal skills, political nous, networking ability, listening
- Professional skills – ability to meet deadlines and plan ahead
- Strong ethical perspective
- Understanding technology and how it can be used as a tool
- Industry knowledge – undergoing professional experience, understanding how theory informs practice, current affairs, developing lifelong learning
- Thinkers – analytical, critical, strategic, evaluative, creative and lateral

### **For and Against Public Relations**

Against PR:

- Deceptive and dishonest communication
- Vested interests
- Manipulating news / facts (Dennis 1991)
- Falsifying truth
- News distorted to favour the PR position
- Influencing audience / publics for own benefit
- Not actually interested in feedback, except in devising appropriate reply
- Mixed motive of PR
- Within government framework
- Advertisers' prejudices
- Institutional agenda
- Gatekeeper filtering

- Engineering of consent (Bernays 1952, cited in Ward 1999, p.158)
- A necessary and effective tool to soothe public hostility, either real or potential, toward business (Chaffee and Petrick 1975, p.104, cited in Ward 1999, p.159).
- \*Hill and Knowlton Case: Citizens for Free Kuwait – a call to war as a result of PR campaign, where postmodernist views looks to signs in overtaking reality and reconstructing reality from myth

For PR:

- Providing essential news service (Merrill 1991)
- Supplement and aid news media
- Expanding message pluralism in society
- Valuable adjunct to news dissemination activities of journalism
- PR practitioner is valuable to news media in providing basic news, commentary on certain news events, tips on news stories and access to news sources
- Following code of professional standards of PRSA
  - Not intentionally communicate false or misleading information
  - Obligated to use care to avoid communication of false or misleading information
  - Adhere to truth and accuracy
  - Refrain from engaging in any practice which tends to corrupt the integrity of channels of communication
- Ethical codes include allegiance to truth and credibility
- Check mechanism in our society
- Expands public discourse
- Helps provide a wide assortment of news
- PR people do provide news to various publics and in doing so, provide essential public service
- Generates information for use by the media
- Fills gaps in the news and provides similar services to those offered by advertising agencies
- Helps set the public agenda
- Serves as:
  - Supplement and *aid to news media*,
  - *Gap-filler*
  - Expanding *message pluralism* in society

## **Propaganda and Public Relations**

- PR as ‘public persuasion through the mass media’ (Hiebert *et al.* 1988, p.300)
- What makes the principal demarcation between propaganda and public relations even more ironic is that it was the practice of propaganda during the early decades of this century which gave birth to the modern public relations industry (Ward 1999, p.157)
- Ivy Lee (the inventor of press release)
- Engineering of consent (Bernays 1952, cited in Ward 1999, p.158) and power to shape public opinion
- Publicity as a necessary and effective tool to soothe public hostility, either real or potential, toward business’

## **PR: Writing the News (Ward 1999)**

- Provide news media with an information subsidy use press releases
- PR firms in the US flood newsrooms with VNRs
- High degree of material in news derived from handouts to the press (McQuail 1992, p.128)
- 56% of stories had begun life as news releases (Schulz 1989) – Sydney press survey 1989
- 90% of news stories were ‘based on the calculated messages of the actors involved and 58.2 percent relied on information routinely supplied to journalists (Sigal 1973) – on two prestigious American newspaper
- Even quality press have a substantial debt to information subsidies from government PR sources (Sigal 1973)

## **History of PR in Australia**

- 1952 Sydney – first listing for PR practitioners
- 1959 – PRIA founded
- 1969 – first degree course in PR offered at Mitchell College (now Charles Sturt University)
- 1840s and 1890s – Education Act 1872, Promotion through press agency – the emergence of PR
- 1841 – Sydney Morning Herald, first Australia’s daily
- Press agent – one who ‘provided representation to the press’
- 1943 – General Douglas MacArthur in Brisbane with 35 PR staff change Australian PR, bringing with him, American methods of PR practice to Australia
- MacArthur uses the approach similar to US Office of War which instead of regarding any publicity as good publicity, chose the approach that press coverage must be managed, controlled and influenced to achieve an end that might have nothing to do with product sales, but everything to do with public opinion

### **TOPIC 3: Public Relations Theory and the Management of Populations**

Mackey (2000, pp.41-63)

- Theories of persuasion, motivation and behaviour
- Theories of communication
- Theories of organisations and organisational communication
- Specialist theories of public relations, include PR and feminist theory

#### **What is theory?**

- Collections of thoughts and ideas that assist with understanding
- Helps explain relationship
- Collections of thoughts and ideas start from certain assumptions
- Rely on what is known, or what is thought to be known, or what can be argued to be true
- Competing theories in PR include different views about the nature of human activity and decision-making
- Theorising public relations as a profession will benefit in a variety of ways by developing its theory base
- If PR practitioners can better understand their professional practice they may be able to figure out how to be more effective in carrying out programs and campaigns and how to be more cost-effective
- PR theories are NOT the different tasks defined and allocated in the conception, planning and execution of a PR activity, which are methods
- Methods are models for how people might do things
- Theories are models for how people might think about things

#### **Public Relation Theories**

PR theory operates in a culturally and politically sensitive realm.

#### **Theories of persuasion, motivation and behaviour**

These involve how people are motivated or how they can be persuaded. Borrowed from the domain of psychologist or social psychologist, these theories facilitate the design and timing of the different parts of PR programs in step with the mental and behavioural processes of target publics.

- Social learning theory
- Exchange theory
- Hierarchy of effects
- Diffusion theory
- Hierarchy of needs

- Opinion, attitude, belief
- Other theories of persuasion
  - Stimulus-response theory
  - Cognition
  - Motivational
  - Social and personality
- *Social learning theory*. Suggests people modify attitudes and behaviour to emulate or fit in with the attitudes and actions exhibited by others if there are psychological rewards for doing so. It offers a way of understanding how people can be encouraged to relate well to an organisation and a way of analysing problems within the organisation where relations could be improved.
- *Exchange theory*. Holds that social life is a series of exchanges where we give and receive affection, respect, labour, goods and services for reward, our hard-earned money for goods and services. Basis: the average person feels obliged to act reciprocally in all sorts of relationships.
- *Hierarchy of effects*. Refers to the sequence of steps involved in any PR or similar persuasive process. It presumes a predictable progression of events, with none of the complications.
- *Diffusion theory*. Deals with the stages people go through before they make decisions. This theory stresses that the media are often involved at the awareness and interest phases while personal contacts are important for the evaluation and decision-making stages. A message in itself is not enough to change behaviour. Some involvement in the community or personal life of the target public would seem to be required for effective results.
- *Hierarchy of needs*. Maslow's theory says people live life at the most rational and pleasant level only after they feel respected and secure socially, psychologically and physically.
- *Opinion, attitude, belief*. Charting how people hold particular views relevant to a client or campaign. Objective is to change fleeting opinions and attitude built up by information to unshakeable belief.
- Other theories of persuasion:
  - *Stimulus-response theory*. People can be conditioned into thinking in certain ways by simple association, playing down the ability for rational, independent thought.
  - *Cognition*. Rational understanding when information made available to publics through organisation's clear and candid explanation.
  - *Motivational*. Persuasion adding to the cognitive approach in seeking to take the public beyond understanding, to motivation to doing something.
  - *Social and personality*. Considerations of the various publics' opinions when presenting a PR program, such as whether to be friendly and informal to certain groups, formal or polite tone, protocol to use for certain VIPs, the appropriateness to give priority to certain people, the disposition of individuals who may be opinion-formers, and others.

## Theories of communication

Communication is claimed as a field of study by scholars in arts, business and social science faculties. Communication theories borrow from linguistics and more recently postmodernist philosophy. Contemporary theories involve how society and its individuals picture themselves and their world through shared message, wrapped up in all sorts of political and philosophical arguments about what sort of world we live in and what sort of society is possible.

- Elaborated likelihood theory
  - Uses and gratification theory
  - Agenda-setting
  - Sender / receiver theories
  - Hot and cool media
  - Coorientation model
  - Semiotics
  - Rhetoric, narrative, ideology, myth
  - Critical theory (Habermas)
- 
- *Elaborated likelihood theory*. Not everyone gets information through the same route or in the same style. A whole range of different communication techniques and styles will be needed to make sure that the message gets across.
  - *Uses and gratification theory*. People may use media for different purposes and considerations must be made on how best to package their message to reach the group they are aiming at.
  - *Agenda-setting*. Relates to mass media influence in setting agenda for the audience.
  - *Sender/receiver theories*. Based on Lasswell (1948) theory of communication which consists of:
    - Source of communication
    - Actual message
    - Way the message is transmitted
    - Who the message is received by
    - Effect on recipient
  - *Hot and cool media*. Hot medium are those which require quite a bit of creative work and imagination on the part of the audience. Cool medium are produced in short sound bites with points put across in simple language or perhaps with humour that does not require so much work from the audience.
  - *Coorientation model*. This suggests that people must have some mental and cultural reference points in common to begin to understand each other – even if they disagree.
  - *Semiotics*. Theories of how images and words convey meanings through symbol to form reality and perception.
  - *Rhetoric, narrative, ideology, myth*. The art or science of the use of words through narrative and ideology.

- *Critical theory.* A movement within sociological and cultural studies which criticises the ways citizens are influenced to think by their surrounding capitalist culture. Jurgen Habermas theorise this concept as manipulating democracies in ways that serve people with financial power.

### **Theories of organisations and organisational communication**

Based on the notion of ‘systems’, this approach uses the way biological and electronic switching and signalling processes operate as a synonym for the ways society and its organisations regulate themselves.

- *Systems theory.* Open and closed systems of communication where organisations were depicted as composed of subsystems – management, production departments, salespeople and the public relations office. This theory has a worrying implication: that, once set up, a system will somehow automatically adjust itself and stay healthy forever.
- *Risk management and conflict management.* Risk management theories presume that a wide spread of managers and employees of an organisation are best able to point to potential disasters or crises. Conflict management involves the analysis of opinions and attitudes people hold, social and personal factors, cognition of situation by different parties and the needs, in which the conflict arose and considerable psychological, historical and intuitive theorising of the cause. Decisions after analysis is made on collaboration, mediation or arbitration for resolution.

### **Specialist theories of public relations**

Public relations as an important role to play in the ethical management of society and its organisations, fulfilled if there is equal and open exchange and respect between organisations and their publics.

- *Grunig and Hunt’s theories.* Advocates symmetrical two-way model, apart from the press agency/publicity model, public information model and two-way asymmetric model.
  - *Press agency/publicity model* aims to ‘publicise the organisation, its products and its services in any way possible’. Examples are blatant stunts.
  - *Public information model* seeks to ‘disseminate information to the public as truthfully and accurately as possible’. Examples are posters and leaflets.
  - *Two-way asymmetric model* aims to ‘persuade the public to agree with the organisation’s point of view, where feedback is used ‘to determine what the public’s attitudes are toward the organisation and how they might be changed’
  - *Two-way symmetric model* is utilised when an organisation wants to ‘develop a mutual understanding between the management of the organisation and the publics that the organisation affects’. An example is the engagement of positive discussion between the organisation and its publics to derive a mutual proposition.
  - *Press agency/publicity model* and *public information model* use one-way communication, dedicated to ‘help the organisation control the publics that affect it’
  - *Two-way asymmetric* and *two-way symmetric models* use two-way communication, but communication flow in two-way asymmetric is greater from the organisation to its publics, while in two-way symmetric, communication flow is considered equal.

- *Situational theory*. Emphasises the practitioner's need to look closely at the way people make up their minds about a matter affecting or potentially affecting them. The theory suggests that people reflect on a situation only if they realise that it affects them before they start on a sequence of activity.

### **Summary**

- Contrast between behaviourist and rationalist approaches
- Behaviourist approaches sympathise with stimulus-response theory (e.g. Maslow's hierarchy of needs, social learning and social exchange)
- Behaviourist approaches assume that there are behaviours or reactions that are programmed into our minds or our cultures
- Rational approaches are based on logical thought (e.g. Habermas' and Grunig's inference that people form their opinions rationally)
- Logical thought requires there to be an ethic in the community that entitles people to adequate information on which to build their views
- Also a need for people's views to be respected by powerful organisations if matters between organisations and publics are to be handled in a civilised fashion

### **TOPIC 4: Media Relations**

Media relations is synonymously used with publicity, an important function of PR. 'PR has become one of the most important external influences on journalism as it is now practised' (Marshall and Kingsbury 1996, p.127).

#### **8 Values to Generating News**

- Impact
- Conflict
- Timeliness
- Proximity
- Prominence
- Currency
- Human Interest
- Unusual

#### **Relations with Media**

- Get to know your media – who writes for which area
- Decide what news is – names, money, impact
- Do not use jargon
- News release
- Never suggest to a journalist or photographer that you have a good story or picture

- Never say ‘No comment’, always say, ‘I need to check some details before I get back’
- Don’t avoid the issue
- Do not be frightened by foot-in-the-door television
- Politely ask journalists their names and use them (Kim Lockwood, *Herald and Weekly Times*, Melbourne)

### **Key Points to Remember in News Releases**

- Focus on 5Ws and H in early part of story
- Use inverted pyramid
- Use letterheads where possible
- Date your release
- Indicate it is a release
- Write a headline
- Use active language
- Leave sufficient margins to allow annotations
- Write ‘more’ or ‘ends’ on the bottom of page one
- Include contact information, including after-hours contact
- Adhere to journalistic style
- Make sure story is newsworthy and appropriate to media outlet
- Use credible authority as source early in story
- Include photo opportunities or professionally taken photographs
- Get your story to the right person at the right time
- Proofread release before sending
- Do not include poor-quality photographs
- Do not use excessive titles
- Do not use excessive adjectives and superlatives
- Do not write a lead of more than 30 words
- Do not pad out your release – keep it succinct
- Do not expect your release to run verbatim
- Do not make statements that you cannot back up
- Do not send releases about non-newsworthy events even if you are pressured to do so
- Do not hound news editors about when they will run your story
- Do not ask journalists why they did not run your story

### **Why hold news conference?**

- To allow wide dissemination of story
- To give all media access to the news at once
- To allow journalists to ask follow-up questions

### **When to hold news conference?**

- Ideally, proactively with plenty of time to plan, prepare and check that everything is in place
- However, can be called in haste, especially in a crisis situation

### **6 Scenarios appropriate for news conference**

- Announcement of considerable importance to a large number of people in community
- Matter of public concern that needs to be explained
- Reporters request for access to key individual and it is important to give all media equal access instead
- A new product or invention in public interest to be unveiled
- A person of importance arriving in town with many media requests for interviews
- Complex issue or situation to be announced and media need access to someone to answer questions

### **Using the Media**

The two main avenues to consider when planning the use of media for a PR program are *advertising* and *publicity*.

#### **Advertising**

- Used as an aspect of PR when a business, organisation, society wants to get a specific kind of promotional message across to one or more of its publics
- Advertising is favoured when business or organisation wants control over the timing, location and frequency of delivery of particular messages
- PR advertising is persuasive or partisan promotion
- Seen as less 'reliable' than news reporting and other forms of publicity

#### **Publicity**

- Is free, but has no guarantee of control over publicity, although familiarity with medium and journalists can assist in providing some measure of control
- No control over what is said, when it is said, where it is said, why it is said or how often it will appear

### **How to use the media**

- Attempts to promote a favourable image
- Understand how various media function
- Approach and deal with the media
- Use the media
- Maintain good relations with the media

### **TOPIC 5: Research and Evaluation in Public Relations**

Research can be defined as ‘the process of finding out’. The Macquarie dictionary defines it as ‘diligent or systematic inquiry or investigation into a subject in order to discover the facts or principles’. In PR, this means inquiring about issues relevant to PR practice in a systematic manner.

#### **Definitions**

- Research in PR as ‘the systematic gathering of information to describe and understand situations and to check out assumptions about publics and public relations consequences’ (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2000, p.343).
- What research does in engaging PR’s relationships with their publics is to help define what information is missing and how existing information can be organised from the perspective of the receiver to ensure credibility (Dilenschneider and Forrestal 1990, p.86).
- ‘Research is of strategic importance to public relations’ and ‘is only as good as the research that underlies it’ (Dilenschneider and Forrestal 1990, p.86).

#### **Importance of Research**

A good idea of how important PR practitioners think research is, may be found in the article by Walker 1997 (pp.97-113):

#### **Research Beliefs**

- A necessary and integral part of planning, program development and evaluation process, accepted by most PR professionals
- Research is largely talked about by PR than actually being done, although acknowledged as important
- PR research mostly done by individuals trained in PR rather than by researchers
- Usually casual and informal, rather than scientific and precise
- Measuring PR outcomes, impact, effectiveness in precise terms is next to impossible
- Most PR research today is for planning of programs and activities, rather than for measuring and evaluating PR outcomes

### **Research Purposes**

- Planning / developing a new PR program, strategy, or activity
- Monitoring / tracking PR activities
- Measuring or evaluating outcomes, impact, or effectiveness of PR programs
- Publicity and promotional purposes (e.g. conducting a poll to use findings for publicity)
- Crisis

### **Research Use**

- Employee / management communication
- Marketing / product PR
- Media relations / publicity
- Corporate image / identity
- Issues tracking and analysis
- Customer relations
- Public affairs / government relations
- Community relations
- Institutional advertising
- Investor / financial relations

### **Research Techniques**

- Publicity tracking / media monitoring
- Literature searches / information retrieval
- Surveys by phone or mail
- Model building
- Mall intercept / shopping centre studies
- Communication audits
- Qualitative in-depth interviews
- Readership / readability studies
- Data collection / analysis surveys
- Observation / participation / role-playing

### **Research Considerations and Obstacles**

- Lack of client / management understanding of PR
- Costs
- Poor understanding by some practitioners of the role of PR
- Practitioners' inability to use research

## **Types of Research** (Johnston and Zawawi 2000)

- Formative Research
- Evaluative Research
  
- *Formative*. Research which feeds into the planning phase of the process.
- *Evaluative*. Research which feeds into the evaluation of the success or failure of the process.

## **Why and when is research used?**

Research revolves around understanding the environment within the organisation operations. Information required may include the needs or attitudes of target publics or stakeholders. The daily work of PR practitioner is based on understanding the 'current situation', knowing what needs to be done to address situation, what organisation could afford to do with available resources, determine the aims, goals and objectives of PR program.

- Step 1: Information gathering on organisation, such as, image, status, history, overview of previous campaigns, and a SWOT
- Step 2: Information on situation
- Step 3: Understanding opinions and attitudes of target group, examining existing evidence from records in organisation of evaluations on previous programs or campaigns

Other models of research in PR process include:

- **ROPE**: Research, Objectives, Programming, Evaluation (Hendrix 1996, p.319)
- **RACE**: Research, Action, Communication, Evaluation (Marston 1979)

## **Why is a research needed?**

- An opportunity may exist where the attitude or behaviour of target public could be favourably influenced (proactive and avoid complex situations in future)
- Unfavourable situation may exist or have been created through previous campaigns (reactive remediating situation)

## **Methods**

- Formal Research
- Informal Research

## **Formal Research**

- 'The systematic process of collecting and analyzing information (data) in order to increase our understanding of the phenomenon with which we are concerned or interested' (Leedy 1997, p.3).
- 'The controlled, objective and systematic gathering of information for the purposes of describing and understanding' (Dozier 1990, p.4).

- In essence, formal research is a scientific approach to answering questions. Expensive and time-consuming, but is objective, credible and reliable.
- Two main methodologies of formal research – qualitative and quantitative
- Qualitative research uses ‘discovery-base methods’ (Caywood 1997, p.43) to explore new aspects or delve further into a particular area. This form of research probes deeper and may sample a relatively small group of respondents
- Qualitative research is open to additional information and new insight, is descriptive and informative, but not often measurable. Its emphasis is on analysis and synthesis of information
- Quantitative research uses ‘verification-based methods’ (Caywood 1997, p.43) to verify situations that the organisation may already be aware of, but without any information to substantiate these beliefs, thoughts, feelings or opinions
- Quantitative research is generally described as confirmatory research and often results in mathematical analysis, as the data gathered are often based on either simple or complex statistical formulae

#### **a) Qualitative Research Techniques**

- In-depth interviews
- Focus groups
- Ethnographic studies
- Case studies

#### **b) Quantitative Research Techniques**

- Surveys
- Omnibus (or piggy-back) surveys
- Content analysis

#### **c) Survey Research**

Survey research is the most frequently used mode of observation in social sciences (Babbie 1995, p.256) and is from scientifically based surveys that statistics are drawn. Questionnaire delivery uses:

- Mail
- Telephone
- Face-to-face
- E-mail
- Fax
- Newsletter

### **Informal Research**

- Environmental monitoring
- Public Relations audits
- Communication audits
- Media content analysis
- Libraries
- Electronic databases
- Interviewing
- Diaries
- Corporate communication archives
- Recording of incoming phone calls
- Testimonials

### **Formative and Evaluative Research**

- Formative research is the research that goes into determining inputs and outputs
- Evaluative research is that which goes into defining outcomes
- Formative research provides the practitioner with a practical road map:
  - indicating what problems or opportunities actually exist
  - what the perceptions and beliefs of publics and audiences are
  - what tools or methods of communication would be most effective in helping organisation achieve its PR objectives with those publics or audiences
- Formative research informs strategy and planning
- Evaluative research:
  - indicates how successful the strategy embarked on actually is
  - demonstrate how effective planning and communication have been
  - allows the practitioner to fine-tune, alter or modify the program plan to achieve greater success with PR outcomes

### **Formative Research**

- Exploratory research
- Development research
- Benchmarking

### **Formative Research Techniques**

- Analysis of existing data
- Benchmark research
- Focus group discussion

- Pilot questionnaires
- Communication audits
- Case studies review
- Expert review
- Public surveys
- Network analysis

## **Evaluation**

Defining outcomes, impact and effectiveness of a PR program

## **Definitions**

- Evaluation is ‘the systematic assessment of a program and its results. It is a means for practitioners to offer accountability to clients – and to themselves’ (Bissland, cited in Wilcox *et. al.* 2000, p.191).
- Evaluation talks about an orderly monitoring of progress to attain the specific objectives of the PR plan where what we did right or wrong is learnt, how much progress we’ve made, and most importantly, how we can do it better next time (Wylie, cited in Wilcox *et al.* 2000, p.192).

## **Objectives**

- The purpose of every PR program or activity is to achieve certain outcomes (objectives and goals)
- Evaluation ensures proper measurement of what has been achieved (or not), and that claims of success or failure can be supported with empirical evidence
- It also helps to justify the amount of money spent on PR and provides a basis for arguing for more funding
- Evaluation research also documents the program success or failure.

## **Evaluative Research**

Marston (1979)

- To conduct an annual audit to review success, shortcomings and goals of program
- To use empirical evaluation techniques
- To use scientific evaluative techniques

Cutlip *et al.*(1994, p.401)

- Program conceptualisation and design
- Monitoring and accountability of program implementation
- Assessment of program utility: impact and efficiency

## **Management by objectives (MBO) for Evaluation Research**

- Statistics on distribution
- Media monitoring
- Media content analysis
- Audience analysis
- Statistical analysis
- Response rate
- Coding material
- Attitude and image studies
- Communication audits
- Organisational culture study
- Analysis of complaints
- Focus group discussions
- In-depth interviews
- Surveys
- Pre- and post-tests
- Unobtrusive data collection
- Quasi-experimental study
- Activity outcome
- Behavioural change

## **TOPIC 6: Planning a Public Relations Program**

Planning in PR is essentially about making the concrete decisions about what needs to be done and the order in which it will be done as a response to a particular situation or in anticipation to something that might occur in future. Through the process of strategic thinking, a strategic plan is laid out to provide a view of how future goals can be achieved.

### **2 Main Types**

- *Strategic planning*. Where an organisation wants to go in PR terms
- *Program planning*. What needs to be done in a specific PR situation or program

### **Elements of a Strategic Plan**

- Executive Summary
- Vision / Mission
- Background
- Situation Analysis (SWOT)

- Strategy
- Publics
- Main Message
- Tactics / Communication Methods
- Implementation / Scheduling (Timing & Calendaring)
- Evaluation / Monitoring / Assessment
- Budget

### **Program Planning**

Before implementing a PR program or activity, it is essential to consider:

- What should be done?
- What sequence to accomplish the organisation's objectives?

### **Approaches to Planning**

- Research
- Analyse
- Apply
- Asking and answering many questions (MBO & Strategic Planning Model)

### **PR Management by Objective (MBO)**

Formulate a strategy that will accomplish organisation's specific objective, focus and directing type of thinking. Using MBO in planning ensures the 'production of relevant messages and establishes criteria against which campaign results can be measured' (Simmons in *Communication Campaign Management*).

### **9 steps MBO (cited in Wilcox 2000)**

Nager and Allen in *Public Relations Management by Objectives*:

- Client / Employer Objectives
- Audience / Publics
- Audience Objectives
- Media Channels
- Media Channel Objectives
- Sources and Questions
- Communication Strategies
- Essence of Message
- Nonverbal Support

## **Strategic Planning Model**

This is the Ketchum's approach which contains 4 elements: *facts*, *goals*, *audience* and *key message*.

### **Facts**

- Category – industry trends
- Product / Service Issues – significant characteristics
- Competitive Facts – who, what competitive strengths, similarities, differences
- Customer Facts – publics: who and why?

### **Goals**

- Business Objectives – objectives and timeframe
- Role of PR – how PR fit in marketing mix?
- Sources of New Business – what sectors produce growth?

### **Audience**

- Target Audiences – audiences and their 'hot' buttons
- Current Mind-Set – audiences' feeling about product, service, or issue
- Desired Mind-Set – how we want audiences to feel?

### **Key Message**

- One Key Message – conveyed to change or reinforce mindsets

### **Elements of Program Plan** (Wilcox et. al. 2000)

- Situation
- Objectives
- Audience
- Strategy
- Tactics
- Calendar/Timetable
- Budget
- Evaluation

### **Situation**

- *Remedial program*. To overcome problem or negativity
- *One-time Project*. To accomplish specific objective
- *Reputation and Public Support*. Reinforce ongoing effort to preserve

## **Objectives**

Usually stating in terms of program outcomes instead of inputs:

- Does it really address situation?
- Is it realistic and achievable?
- Can success be measured in meaningful terms?

2 types of objectives:

- Informational
- Motivational (bottom-line)

## **Audience**

- Targets specific publics within a general public
- Identify key publics through market research based on demographics

## **Strategy**

A strategy statement describes how, in concept, an objective is to be achieved, providing guidelines and themes for the overall program (e.g. key messages / themes).

## **Tactics**

‘Nuts and bolts’ part of the plan that describes, in sequence, the specific activities that put the strategies into operation and help achieve stated objectives. Examples include:

- Toll-free facilitated product literature
- Physical illustrations
- Press conferences
- Press kit
- News releases
- Magazine
- Testimonials on software
- Tour / Test-drive

## **Calendar / Timetable**

- When campaign should be conducted
- Determine proper sequence of activities
- Compile list of steps that must be completed to produce finished product
- Environmental context of situation in which time when key messages are most meaningful to intended audience

## **Budget**

2 categories:

- Staff time
- Out-of-pocket

Considerations:

- How much will program cost?
- Reverse approach: Organisations establish an amount they can afford, then PR write program plan that reflects amount allocated

## **Evaluation**

- Criteria should be realistic, credible, specific, in line with client or employer expectations
- Restate objectives and which evaluation method to be used

## **TOPIC 7: Implementing the Plan – Action and Communication in Public Relations**

### **Definitions**

- Communication in PR is about executing the plan that has been prepared – the most noticeable part of PR work.
- Communication means putting into action decisions that have been made in order to achieve the set objectives
- Action in PR is defined as ‘socially responsible acts taken by PR departments or other parts of the organisation with your counsel (Cutlip *et al.* 2000, p.407).
- Action is about what you do or have done, while communication is telling people about what you have done or are going to do.

### **Strategy and Tactics**

A strategy is the overall objective constructed out of sight of the ‘enemy’ but those in command; tactics are immediate measures taken in full view of adversaries. Tactics continue to be the visible implementation of strategy.

### **Range of Tactics**

- Publicity
- Newsletters
- Leaflets
- Direct mail
- Posters

- Flyers
- Stickers
- Functions and events
- Internet sites
- Competitions
- Celebrity spokespeople
- Lobbying
- Community meetings / announcements
- Open days
- Annual reports
- Videos / Photography
- Sponsorships
- Exhibitions

### **TOPIC 8: Public Relations and New Communication Technologies**

PR professionals are needed to ‘drive’ technologies like the World Wide Web and e-mail use in organisations where communication imparts, carry out the sharing of information, news and ideas, so as to make common among people the process of message exchange.

#### **Communication Technologies**

- Communication technologies are tools for exchange of messages among humans
- Information technologies are tools for data management
- Communication technologies are often called media because they mediate messages among senders and receivers
- Interpersonal media are those that allow message exchange among two or three people
- Mass media are those through which messages are sent to a large and diverse group of receivers
- Newer media are those which have emerged and gained widespread use in the past two decades
- Media diffused throughout the first 70-75 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are traditional

#### **Technological Determination**

- Technological determinists believe that technologies produce social and behavioural changes independent of other influences
- They believe that the Internet radically change people
- They claim that newer media improves the practice

- Holds that technology evolves independent of society and social forces and that it exerts its effects without regard for the understandings, protestations, resistances and even the champions attached to it
- Social change is driven by technology, rather than the institutionalisation or cultural adaptation of the technology
- At policy level, its emphasis is on investing in technology to spearhead economic growth
- Those who implement technology may be more interested in getting the technology working rather than considering its social contexts, implications or applications
- Technological determinists are either optimists or pessimists

### **Socio-culturalism / Social Constructivism**

- This is the notion that societies determine the emergence and use of technologies
- Socio-culturalists argue that society moulds technologies, finds uses for them, and rejects those that work badly or offer little benefit
- Argues that technology is no different from any other institutions or phenomena – it is a product of society
- Technology arises and changes because of the institutions of society and is a representation of the vested interests of different social groupings
- Technology cannot exist without society's tacit and implicit approval
- Ultimately, it is the market of intended users that will determine the success or otherwise of any technology
- How we understand technology determines how we use it which consequently determines how it affects society

### **Complex Systems**

- Middle position between technological determinism and social constructivism
- Hearn, Mandeville and Anthony (1998) notes that technology evolves in the context of social processes and forces and is therefore not different from any other societal product
- At the same time, there is a radical uncertainty about technological change – technology is unpredictable because it does not simply and directly represent the interests of those most involved in its development

### **Electronic communications**

2 main areas:

- Telematics (telephone, fax, videotex, audio and video teleconferencing)
- Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) (email, bulletin boards, diaries/schedules, electronic conferences, databases/retrieval systems, research and analysis)

### **Public Relations and Communication Technologies**

- PR practitioners must be computer literate and able to make information readily available to their increasingly sophisticated publics within and outside organisations
- Important publicity can be gained through using community bulletin boards (BBS)
- Electronic media releases are attractive to news outlets as it can be quickly screen-edited and printed/broadcast
- PR does not have to be bound to physical space of an office
- Many activities can be done from home or while travelling
- Hours of work can be redefined
- Electronic communication can overcome difficulties associated with world time zones
- Speed of communication is enhanced

### **Newer channels of communication**

- Telecommunications ‘to communicate from afar’
- Mobile phones ‘sound from afar’
- Facsimile ‘to make similar’
- Fax newsletters (broadcast fax)
- Fax on demand
- Fax mailboxes
- Video
- Video news releases (VNRs)
- Videoconferencing
- Computer-mediated communication
- E-mail
- Web (information in and information out)
- Chat (IRC)
- Usenet newsgroups
- Internet misinformation and rogue websites

### **TOPIC 9: Government Relations**

Governments with various political persuasions at all levels, federal, state and local, engage in public relations to promote legislation and policies to their publics.

#### **Definitions**

- Government Relations is ‘the art of working with the myriad of legislative and regulatory bodies that have influence over your organisation. It takes place at the local, state and

federal levels. And if your organisation does any kind of business abroad or has clients overseas, it occurs on the international level as well' – Tymson and Sherman (1996, p.97)

- 'Public affairs is related to issues management ... in that it helps organisations anticipate or respond to issues affecting their activities or environment. Public affairs efforts include seeking to shape public opinion and legislation, developing effective responses to matters of public concern, and helping the organisation adapt to public expectations. Specifically, public affairs may be involved in monitoring public policy, providing political education for employees or other constituents, maintaining liaisons with various government departments, and encouraging political participation' – Baskin and Aranoff (1992, p.35)
- Lobbying is 'a specialized (sic) part of public relations that builds and maintains relations with government primarily for the purpose of influencing legislation and regulation' – Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000, p.19)

Government relations is used to cover 3 main areas:

- PR practices by government
- PR with government practised by businesses, groups and organisations
- Public Affairs

3 main ways in which PR intersect with democratic government:

- Use of media management by government to pursue its political and policy objectives
- Use of public affairs/lobbying by interest groups to affect government decisions
- Use of campaign techniques in the elections required prior to the formation of governments

**Tasks of Lobbyists** (Tymson and Sherman 1996, pp.102-103)

- Monitoring legislation and regulation
- Creating opportunities to present an organisation's view
- Promoting these views through the media
- Serving as a source of information to government officials and their staff
- Keeping senior management informed on legislative or regulatory developments

## **TOPIC 10: Internal and Community Relations**

### **Internal Relations**

Internal relations is the efficient communications within organisations which is critical to the pursuit of organisational objectives and outcomes. Communication must be two-way between levels/sections and various individuals if understandings, goals, a common sense of purpose, pride, profitability, and collective/corporate well-being are to be sought and, hopefully, achieved. People's roles and responsibilities may vary within organisations but organisations cease to function effectively if there is no cohesiveness, a shared sense of endeavour which comes from an interactive process of communication.

The term 'organisation' has been defined as 'a system of coordinated activities of a group of people working cooperatively toward a common goal under authority and leadership' (William Scott, cited in Goldhaber 1990, p.38).

Internal publics comprise two main groups:

- Organisation's employees
- Association's members

### **Employees**

- Employees are all the people working for the organisation, from the chairman of the board to the junior in the mailroom
- Employee publics do not only refer to the full-time permanent staff, but include part-time and casual employees, contractors and volunteers

### **Members**

- Members join association out of special or professional interest
- Members pay a joining fee

### **Tools and channels of communication**

- Newsletter and company newspapers
- Notice boards
- Memos
- Awards
- Events
- Intranets
- Interpersonal communication

### **Community Relations**

Community relations should also be seen as an interdependent relationship where every community has a vital stake in the economic health and prosperity of its institutions. Every organisation has a vital stake in the health and prosperity of the community it inhabits (Baskin and Aronoff 1992, p.231).

- Primary task is to enhance the visibility/status of the organisation, its value in the eyes of the community/communities
- Maintain and enhance on-going activity
- One-off events have their place, but on-going, often low level exposure, is important in complementing other forms of publicity

- Identifying and tap on a variety of networks (e.g. community leaders, opinion shapers, local media, civic groups, local/regional councils, schools, hospitals, charities, sporting groups, etc)
- Provision of regular information to community groups and maintenance of personal contacts
- Maintaining the attractiveness of an organisation's facilities and encouraging your employees
- Members acting as ambassadors
- Commitment to current community concerns (e.g. environmentally-friendly)
- Sponsorship
- Grants/donations of equipment (philanthropy)
- Scholarships
- Supporting fund-raising projects
- Being active in local service clubs
- Assisting local/regional governments and agencies

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