



## **Getting Public Relations Right: The Roles and Responsibilities of Public Relations Professional**

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**ABSTRACT:** Public relations enjoys an indisputable role in the success of organisations. Public relations are used as a strategic tool to build and sustain relationships. It is also used to nurture a positive image about the organisation. Responsive relationships support a reduction in conflicts between organization and public and foster cooperation between an organisation and its other entities.

**Keywords:** Public relations right, Communication, strategic tool, Responsive relationships support

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Public relations is certainly one of the developing and diffusing arenas around the globe. Public relations as a profession finds its scope in any organization having well-structured information, a key requisite to develop relationships (Raupp & Ruler, 2006) [4]. The popularity, productivity and persistent survival of a company, organization or an institution depends on the extent to which it gets support from its community members in achieving its targets. Yet, there is no consensus about its definition among the practitioners and researchers.

Public relations is a convoluted anomaly for which a few practitioners and scholars share a common definition. Not much research has been done in the past, although communication scientists felt the need for research in public relations at least two decades ago. However, in the last decade, some researchers have tried to study about public relations.

Public relations are often mistaken to be a fraction of marketing sector. Bobbit and Sullivan (2009) defines public relation as “the management function that uses two-way communication to receive information from and give information to an organization’s various publics”. Though having cordial online relationships by means of social media is certainly essential, it is also imperative to develop and sustain candid relationships with the public [1].

Public relations also support an organization in realizing its accountability in relation to its associates and the society. An ample and enduring public relations platform essentially facilitates an organization in attaining familiarity as a noble organization and secure magnanimity from its community members.

### **II. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSIONAL**

The International Association of Assessing Officers (2011) [5] has set a standard for the roles and responsibilities and the skills to be possessed by the public relations officer of any organization. According to the report, the fundamental task of any public relations officer is to listen to the opinion of the public about the organization and identify the potential problems and opportunities and assess the program. Along with this skill is the maturity to address “issues management and action planning”. As they are often in the forefront, they should be able to predict the shortcomings and formulate the solution accordingly.

Communication is the watchword in the public relations. National School Public Relations Association advocated “communicator role” also as one of the key roles of the public relations officer. An exceptional public relations officer should be capable of playing a manager’s role who can handle the issues of the organization by communicating with the right audience and devising a satisfactory plan for the organization. Communicating with the right audience refers to any kind of communication with the public, employees or higher authorities through any mode of communication-written, oral, or through the media.

Cutlip *et al* (2006) mentions that activities like “scanning the environment, building coalitions, managing organizational and program issues, and serving as counsel to upper levels of administration for institutional policy decision-making” are some of the core responsibilities of a public relation officer [2].

Public relations specialists, also referred to as “communication specialists or media specialists” assist the companies or clienteles in developing and sustaining healthy relations with the public, clients and employees. People who hunt for these public relations specialists include persons from various sectors, such as business, hospitals, universities and other philanthropic organizations. However, when the employers identify the need to have an effective public relations for the prosperity of their company, they gradually bank upon these public relations specialists for guidance on their communication policies. Public relations specialists manage specific functions of the organization such as

media communication, community relations, “employee and investor relations”, dispute negotiation, “industry and government relations” etc.

Besides communicating his/her ideas unambiguously and certainly, a public relations specialist ought to possess good innovative skills, leadership qualities and managerial skills along with rational and exploratory skills. Individuals willing to prefer public relations profession must be sociable, self-reliant, possess knowledge of human psychology and the knack of influencing the public. Hence public relations may be defined as “a strategic communication process that helps manage, protect and enhance the reputation of an organization, its members and its services”.

Managing public relations as a process is simple, i.e., publicize by securing media attention; lucrative, i.e., it can reach a multitude of people with minimal cost; and robust, i.e., the right news is conveyed from the right source. An effective public relations specialist/team can support the clients in creating a better impression and reliability, strengthening and enhancing the clients’ honor, escalating the cordial relationships and influencing the community. Public relations is distinct from marketing, although they do a sort of marketing the goodwill about the organization to the public on behalf of its stakeholders.

Clow and Baack (2007) opines that the functions of many organizations undertaken by the public relations cannot be categorized under marketing, as these sectors only focus on their clients and network of people, whereas public relations sector centers on private and foreign shareholders involving staffs, investors, civil associations, government and the community. Public relations earlier functioned as a blunt mediator between the organization and the community executing certain fundamental task [3].

Public relations is an “art and science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leaders, and implementing planned programs of action which serve both organizations and the public interest”.

Internet technology has influenced all spheres of life and public relations department is no exception to it. With the advancement in internet technology and social media, public relations have further gained importance. The role of public relations has extended to technological domains that favour social media.

Several well-established companies have found their space in commonly used social networking sites like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter and also possess a website for themselves regulated by the public relations specialist. Many firms rely on public relations specialists to follow their customers' opinion posted online and react to any damaging posts or reviews.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps the organization to develop and sustain good relationship with its public. Planned and deliberate efforts on the part of the organization are necessary to garner public support. Public relations officers are responsible for managing all aspects of planned PR activities. Hence it important that they are well aware of their various responsibilities and possess the necessary skills to carry out the responsibilities to perfection.

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