



Public Relations (Short Course)

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Topic 1

Introduction to Public Relations

The Public Relations Environment

Public Relations (PR) is a concept which explores various ways of promoting effective relationship between different functional groups of people within communities or societies. It involves communicating the intentions of a particular entity to other groups or institutions that have an interest in the activities of the entity who is communicating his views or opinion. The relationship building could be between an organisation and its employees or the organisation and the public whose make up could be as diverse as one could imagine.

A PR consultant's service is required as an adviser or mediator between the organisation and the external public whose needs shape the goals of the organisation. PR involves understanding the values and attitudes of the public to help management frames adequate policies which are in line with acceptable public perception. Although PR is unique to each organisation, the principles employed each organisation may be fundamentally similar.

PR involves a range of functions such as:

- The ability to anticipate and sample public opinion, attitudes, and values in order to analyse and interpret the implications of the results on the functioning of an organisation
- Providing management with good advice for decision-making
- Providing excellent communication to improve relationships and avoiding negative public opinion on activities of the organisation being represented by a PR practitioner
- Engaging in programmes of research and evaluation and communicating the aims of an organisation to help the public have a better understanding of what it wants to achieve. PR undertakes programmes such as fund-raising, marketing, government relations, conferences, press releases, press conferences etc., to help in building strong relationships with the public
- Undertaking programmes through careful planning and implementation to influence public policy
- Recruiting, training and developing staff to perform some important PR functions listed above
- Using knowledge from sociology, psychology, communication skills, and other skills such as media relations, advertising, speech writing, and presentations

Different definitions of PR abound from diverse groups of interested parties because PR is still a developing discipline. In some instances, the definitions include a wide range of functions for PR to perform but on other occasions the definitions only contained few functions for the practitioner to undertake.

A study by Harlow (1976) unearthed 472 different definitions which he summarised as follows:

'Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organisation and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinions; defines and emphasises the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilise change; serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principle tools.'

Definitions of Public Relations

According to the *Webster's New International Dictionary*, PR can be defined as:

- 'The promotion of rapport and goodwill between a firm or institution and other persons, special publics or the community at large, through the distribution of interpretative material/development of neighbourly interchange, and the assessment of publics'.
- "the degree of understanding and goodwill achieved between an individual, organisation, or institution and the public".
- "the art or science of developing reciprocal understanding and goodwill".

Other popular definitions of PR include the following:

1. Scot Cutlip and Allen H. Carter:

"Public Relations is the planned effort to influence opinion through good character and responsible performance, based upon mutually satisfactory two-way communication".

UK's Institute of Public Relations:

"the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its public".

2. Sam Black:

"the fundamental purpose of Public Relations practice is to establish a two-way flow of mutual understanding based on truth, knowledge and full information".

3. Edward L. Bernays:

"the attempt by information, persuasion and adjustment to engineer public support for an activity, cause, movement, or institution."

4. International Conference of Public Relation (Mexico City, 1978):

This definition given at the Mexican conference is just apt to succinctly define what PR is all about: that PR involves significant planning and research to critically assess the situation requiring PR initiative, the result of which should lead to PR advising management on what course of action to take with regards to the situation, and that whatever action is taken should ultimately benefit both the organisation undertaking the PR and the interest of the public.

Simpler Definitions

D.S. Mehta gives a simpler definition of PR as “an attempt through information, persuasion, adjustment, and contacts, to seek support for some activities, causes, movements, institutions, products, or services.”

Analysis of Definitions

The various definitions of PR share many similarities in terms of the following functions:

- PR is planned and executed on behalf of management of organisations
- PR has to do with promoting relationship between an organisation and a specific public or stakeholder
- PR involves assessing the attitude and opinions of the public under consideration
- PR involves policies, procedures and action taken by organisations for the benefit of the public as well as the organisation
- PR requires good two-way communication between the organisations and the public

Nature and Scope of Public Relations

From the many definitions of PR, it is clear that PR is basically the quest to establish favourable communication link between two entities with the aim of helping the entities understand each other. The link could be between an individual or organisation and the public. The objective is to explain the opinion or aims of the individual or the organisation to the public. Feedback from the public is valuable to helping shape an organisation’s response to a problem or a policy put forth by the individual or the organisation. PR’s ultimate goal is to enhance the relationship between the organisation and the public to maintain peaceful coexistence.

PR seeks to fulfil three main objectives:

1. Attract attention to issues
2. Win the confidence of the public
3. Get the public to understand events based on facts and not on rumours or speculations

Understanding the above objectives of PR should ultimately lead to persuading the public to accept a particular point of view and/or take certain actions or steps.

Critical to achieving these objectives is the need to understand the position of management as well as knowing what management wants to do in terms of:

- i. The message it wants to transmit
- ii. The recipient of the message
- iii. How the message should be delivered
- iv. The purpose to the message

The above components of communication highlight the 'who', 'what', 'why', and 'how' questions that a good PR programme should answers in order to obtain effective results.

An excellent PR programme should include the following:

- Comprehensive understanding or knowledge of the organisation, its aims and objectives
- Communication of thoughts and actions of the organisation to the public or stakeholders
- Obtaining feedback on the message delivered and evaluating the effectiveness thereof

Elements in Public Relations

PR consists of four main elements:

- i. Two-way communication
- ii. Mutual understanding
- iii. Caring for public opinion
- iv. Social responsibility of the organisation to the public

i. **Two-way communication**

Establishing a two-way communication between an organisation and public is one of the pillars of PR. This involves sending messages to specific target groups and receiving feedback and determining the effectiveness of the message. It is important to improve on already-established communication links using effective PR tools to promote existing cordial relationships. If there are obstacles to free flow of two-way communication, then these have to be resolved sensibly to restore favourable communication links. It is also important to bear in mind that frequent and accurate dissemination of information from management to employees and the public will prevent a lot of potential problems from taking root.

ii. Mutual Understanding

All PR policies should include and examine internal and external activities in relations to the company and the public respectively. Examining internal activities requires an understanding of the organisation's current reputation while external activities underscores the need to understand the public needs and keep them informed on actions or achievements of the organisation. It is often the case that public and private expectations are in conflict with each other. For instance, in the manufacturing industry, private interest from the employees seek to maximize wage payment while at same time public entities in the form of government, tax agencies, shareholders and consumers tend to solicit for higher taxes and profits and lower prices respectively. PR seeks to establish suitable two-way communication between the conflicting parties and interests to resolve the conflicts in the best possible way through communication channels.

iii. Caring for Public Opinion

Identifying and understanding public opinion or public sentiment is important for PR policy framers because it can make or break an organisation. Having respect for what the public thinks and acting in a manner which considers their feeling is a sure means to showing an organisation cares about what the public feels. Understanding the sentiments or interest of the public leads to making effective PR policies which rely on informed public opinion by communicating the right information to the public to establish mutually beneficial relationships between stakeholders, wholesalers, suppliers, and organisations using the two-way communication channel.

iv. Social Responsibility

PR practices tend to reconcile the public and the organisation's interests and to promote healthy relationship between the two parties. By deploying PR, organisations show concern for the needs of the public when the public's opinion is included in the decision-making process. However, there are some organisations which do not seem to care about the welfare of the public or stakeholders and as a result they tend to encounter unnecessary problems at some point in time when they step on the public's toes.

Scope of Public Relations Practice

Some functions of PR includes the following:

- Undertaking publicity campaigns to promote products and services for organisations
- Publishing house journals for employees
- Producing general meeting reports
- Advertising

- Producing pamphlets and booklets
- Undertaking community work or corporate donations to the community
- Public-speaking
- Radio and TV programmes
- Direct mail
- Exhibitions, tours, conferences and open house programmes
- Providing employees with training in customer relations
- Answering question from the media and public bodies including issuing press release
- Making films, documentaries and films
- Formulating company policies
- Interacting with legislators and government officials
- Writing correspondence for organisations
- Providing sales training
- Promotion events
- Arranging for specials events, parties
- Personal calls

It is important to remember that PR functionalities differ from one organisation to the next. In other words, PR function of each organisation is unique because each organisation is unique.

Role of Public Relations

For institutions to function effectively and efficiently, they need to develop good relationships with diverse groups in society. Institutions need to improve their relationship with groups such as employers, shareholders, consumers and the local community.

The key to successful PR is communication. Communication is made up of three main components which are described below:

i. What you want to say

The message is focus of every communication. The message must be crafted to convey exactly what you intended to communicate and must not be ambiguous. It may be directed at consumers, or the public about a product or service or to inform employees about the latest development in an organisation's operation. It is important for management or the individual wishing to secure the services of a PR practitioner to determine beforehand the exact message to deliver. Messages must be framed in such a manner to attract attention instantly.

ii. The Public You Want to Reach

Determine who exactly you would like your message to reach. This involves undertaking research to identify the target group. Identify critical groups of people such as local authorities or MPs who

can influence your business. Try to develop good investor relationship with the financial establishments as this will improve your standing or reputation with them and fetch your juicy process in the event of a takeover or when seeking for financial backing from them

iii. How to get the message across

Decide on the ideal medium to convey your messages. This is when an experienced and highly skilled PR practitioner can make a big difference in selecting the right option and the right package for delivering the message.

Limitations of Public Relations

PR is effective in accomplishing its goals provided there is an accompanying high performance on the part of the organisation. It is not a tool to resolve all problems facing an organisation neither should it be used as a propaganda machine. PR is successful when good ethics and values are respected by the practitioner. IT is best to ensure that a PR campaign takes cognisance of public interests and it should be sustained for the long term to win the public sympathy.

Benefits of Public Relations

The primary benefits derived from public relations are:

- PR helps organisations and the public to discuss their unique interest and find ways to resolve conflicts (when they exist) and bring about mutual understanding between the two parties and acceptance
- Promotes an organisation's goods and services by building a good reputation based on outstanding performance
- PR promotes mutual understanding and promote smooth relationship
- It is a means to showcase an organisation's capability and attract new talents to work for the company
- PR keeps people informed about issues that affect them
- It makes organisations socially responsible to the community and improves relations
- PR can be used to counter public misconceptions by providing them with accurate information
- PR enhances loyalty and confidence of employees

PR is usually practiced in the daily lives of people as well as established businesses. The main difference between private and business PR practice is that PR for business is more refined and professional.

What Public Relations People Do?

People who work in PR have wide range of roles and different titles such "public relations /corporate communications consultant, executive, manager, director, officer, advisor, counsellor among others".

They work for diverse groups of organisations. The 3 main categories of work for PR personnel for include:

- In-house (practitioners may work for private or public organisations)
- Consultancy (practitioners work for one or more clients for a fee)
- Freelance (practitioner is self-employed and may work for in-house or consultancies when the need arises but this is usually a short-term contract)

The above categories share similar function with slight differences such as:

- For in-house type, one gets to know the organisation more intimately with opportunity to work on a wide range of PR activities in a diverse range of industries with key players such as MPs or decision-makers
- Consultancy work may involve working on diverse projects and specialist fields such as finance, public affairs, or technology

TABLE 1 Examples of what public relations people do (source: Fawkes 2004)

Public Relations Activity	Explanation	Examples
Internal communication	Communicating with employees	In-house newsletter, suggestion boxes
Corporate PR	Communicating on behalf of whole organisation, not goods or services	Annual report, conferences, ethical statements, visual identity, images
Media relations	Communicating with journalists, specialists, editors from local, national, international and trade media, including newspapers, magazines, radio, TV and web-based communication	Press releases, photocalls, video news releases, off-the-record briefings, press events.
Business to business	Communicating with other organisations, e.g. suppliers, retailers	Exhibitions, trade events, newsletters.
Public affairs	Communicating with opinion formers, e.g. local/national politicians, monitoring political environment	Presentations, briefings, private meetings, public speeches.
Community relations/ corporate social responsibility	Communicating with local community, elected representative, head teachers, etc	Exhibitions, presentations, letters, meetings, sports activities and other sponsorship.
Investor relations	Communicating with financial organisations/individuals	Newsletters, briefings, events.

Strategic communication	Identification and analysis of situations, problem and solutions to further organisational goals	Researching, planning and executing a campaign to improve ethical reputation of organisation
Issues management	Monitoring political, social, economic and technological environment	Considering effect of US economy and presidential campaign on UK organisation
Crisis management	Communicating clear messages in fast changing situation or emergency	Dealing with media after major rail crash on behalf of police, hospital or local authority
Copywriting	Writing for different audiences to high standards of literacy	Press releases, newsletters, web pages, annual reports
Publications management	Overseeing print/media processes often using new technology	

Topic 2

Differences and Similarities in Public Relations, Advertising and Publicity

Advertising

Most standard textbooks tend to define advertising as follows:

“Advertising is communicating with and influencing someone to do something-to buy a product or service or something to think about”.

According to the Britannica Encyclopaedia, advertisement is “any paid form announcement intending to promote the sale of commodity or service, to advance an idea or to bring about some other effect desired by the advertiser.”

Advertising involves sponsors paying for goods and services to be promoted via several communication channels such as TV, radio, or billboards. To advertise means to pay for an idea or product or service to be communicated to a specific audience to influence and keep them interested in what is being advertised.

The purpose of advertising is to:

- Persuade people to buy a product or service; or take an action or think about something
- Announce a new product or service, or an idea / concept
- Announce a modification (price, ingredient, feature, packaging, special offer, etc.)
- Challenge competition (in terms of message or proposition)
- Maintain sales, retrieve lost sales or enter new markets
- Educate the public
- Recruit staff
- Announce a sponsorship

Individuals or organisations undertake advertising to build and maintain their brand image and give value to their products and services. Advertising can be classified into two categories: as product advertising or as institutional advertising (also known as Public Relations Advertising).

Product advertising is self-explanatory. It involves promoting a particular product for the public to purchase. Institutional advertising on the other hand has to do with enhancing the image or reputation of an institution to win the public’s affinity, favour, or goodwill towards the institution. Having a good image in the eyes of the public can translate into indirect benefit of increased sales due to the good reputation of producing quality products.

Publicity

Publicity involves having products or services featured in newspapers or non-commercial programmes on TV or radio without paying for it. The feature article to be produced on the company's profile, products or services is prepared by a journalist on their own volition or at the behest of the company who have something to announce on the 'special' product or service which they believe may be of interest to the public. Publicity is mainly used as a tactical tool to a great extent by PR consultants to achieve specific objectives. It lends itself to being a very credible tool because, it is perceived as originating from the media house and not the company, therefore the messages are widely accepted. In-depth skill is required to reap full benefit from publicity campaigns otherwise it may do more damage than good when not properly applied. This means that messages should be well-worded, factual, and truthful and not portrayed in a manner as to be perceived as an advertisement.

Public Relations

Using PR requires having good knowledge of psychology to persuade the public by deploying elements of publicity, advertising and any other useful communication. According to the British Institute of Public Relations (IPR), PR can be defined as:

"The planned effort to establish and improve the degree of mutual understanding between an organisation, or individual, and any group of persons or organisations, with the primary object of assisting that organisation or individual to deserve, acquire and retain a good reputation".

Advertising or publicity is characterised by sending messages in one direction using adverts or commercials to win more customers whereas PR is a two-way communication tool. The key ingredient for a successful PR activity lies in obtaining feedback for every message sent out to the target public.

Differences

The basic difference between PR, advertising, and publicity include differences based on:

- The objective of the communication
- The physical nature or character of the message
- The effect of the message

Similarities between PR, advertising, and publicity are mainly found in:

- The media used for communication
- The elements used to create the message

We will now elaborate on these differences and similarities below:

Advertising

As an example, let us assume that we want to advertise a brand of premium toilet soap to consumers. We can analyse specific components of advertising elements to use in order to achieve a high impact and conversion rates.

The Objectives

- 1) To sell the brand (e.g. Liril/Lux/Cinthol) to the target consumers.
- 2) To achieve repeat purchase.
- 3) To achieve specified and targeted sales of the brand and profit for the company,

Message Communication (What message do you want to send?)

We wish to communicate messages consumers and make them aware of the availability of the brand of premium toilet soap on the market, or any particular brand of product or services and their benefits to the consumers. Ultimately, the advert would aim at winning brand loyalty of the consumers. This will of course depend on what consumers want and also on competition from other vendors of similar product.

Target Group: (To whom?)

- i. Women who earn higher incomes
- ii. Women who are modern, sophisticated and show more care about their personal hygiene and skin complexion
- iii. Women who have the money to afford high quality products

Communication Media: (Where to advertise?)

Communication can be in the mass media such as:

- The press
- The TV
- The cinema
- The radio

Timing of Activity: (When?)

Advertising should be done throughout the year or periodically broadcast in strategic manner for good effect. The extent of advertising usually depends on availability of resources as well as prevailing market conditions.

Development of Message: (How?)

Effective advertising campaign could be developed with the help of experience or market research before releasing to target publics in existing or potential markets.

Publicity

We will use similar analysis presented under advertising to explain how to go about publicity campaigns but in this case we will use financial issue in place of a product.

Objectives

- To announce special features of financial issue
- To create awareness and obtain feedback on the financial issue
- To provide specific details and facts about the issue
- To advice potential investors on what action to take with respect to the issue
- To build organisations' image

Message Communication: (What?)

Information on the financial issue should be delivered in such as manner and with facts that will solicit quack responses from investors. The message must be conveyed as if the source is the press or media. The message may include information on the company's history, aims, and objectives, growth plans and its financial outlook.

Messages may also include the following:

- 1) Potential investors.
- 2) Present shareholder and investors.
- 3) Company employee.
- 4) Government.
- 5) Media (specially the financial press)
- 6) Financial analysts.

Communication Media: (How?).

One mode of communication is to deliver the publicity via business news on TV. Another is to make use of financial columns in magazines and newspapers. Other techniques used for publicity include:

- 1) Press relations / hand-outs and press conferences,
- 2) Direct mail shots/ folders,
- 3) Investor conferences,
- 4) Video films,
- 5) Annual reports.

Time of activity: (When?)

It is best to start publicity activities before issue is released in the media and also after the issue has been published. Before announcing the issue, a corporate advertising campaign is done to build the company's

image. However, if resources are not sufficient to undertake corporate advertising, then press releases to magazines and newspapers can be done to get the message across.

Development of Message: (Where?)

The key to successful crafting of messages is having the right talent and experience. The best source of expertise is obtained from the services of people who work at advertising agencies or PR advertising departments of companies. It is critical to note the publicity campaigns are continuous processes and should be done for a sustained duration.

Public Relations

This section highlights how to practically use PR to solve an internal crisis such as a strike in an organisation (e.g. at a factory).

Objectives

- To resolve disputes through a two-way communication and provide the right conditions for negotiation
- To bring the strike action to a close

Message Communication: (What?)

The message sent to help resolve a crisis such as a strike should be designed to encourage mutual confidence between the employer and the employees. The message should also identify areas of mutual benefits to the two parties to enable positive dialogue to resolve the problem by considering the demands from both sections while working to arrive to an amicable solution.

Target Group: (To whom?)

- Workers
- Union leaders
- Employees and management personnel
- Outsiders (the customers, suppliers, media etc.)

Communication Media: (How?)

- Messages may be delivered using notice boards
- Publishing in house journal
- Deploying news sheet, posters and banners
- Video magazines
- Press releases in case communication need to reach extern parties as well
- Exchange of letters and facts dealing with the problem
- Personal meetings between the union and management

Time of Activity: (When?)

Prompt communication should be initiated when issues such as strikes occur. The negotiators should establish and maintain an open channel of communication for the duration of the strike and long after the issues have been resolved to win the confidence of all parties concerned, especially the employees and external groups. In short, the principle is to provide the right response at the right time in highly-charge situations like a strike.

Development of Message: (Where?)

Messages must be crafted to reflect the objectives and must also be suitable for the media to be used to communicate. In other words, the message should have the right tone and voice and should also accurately report the facts of the situation. A well-planned PR campaign should achieve a high impact and be capable of resolving this delicate issue people undertaking a strike action by bridging any existing communication gaps between the concerned parties internally within the organisation as well as externally between the organisation and the public.

Topic 3

Public Relations' Tools and Methods

We have already defined PR as the art and science of creating and maintaining a two-way communication relationship with different publics. The term the “public” refers to stockholders, shareholders, employees, activists, interest groups, suppliers, government, communities, and the media, etc. The nature of an organisation determines its public. It is the responsibility of the PR practitioner to choose the most suitable media for transmitting information to the various publics. The kind of media chosen should make it easy for the recipient to receive and comprehend the message being delivered. The message should also be crafted in the form for easy digestion and to ensure communication is effective (i.e. the literacy level of the recipients should be known).

This unit will focus on various media for sending information to target audiences. We will also look at the advantages and/or disadvantages of these media while bearing in mind that the type of media selected will be determined in part by the kind of public, the finance available, time limits, and the objectives of the message.

Publicity Media

The mass media (TV, the press, radio, and film, etc.) is the vehicle for conveying information or messages to the masses who are scattered over large geographical areas. The PR practitioner has to have detailed knowledge of these media in order to deploy them more effectively. The type of media chosen for publicity will depend on the objectives of the publicity, the nature of the audience, the budget available, and the content of message to send.

The Press

The press can serve as an effective medium for sending information with high impact. Many stakeholders such as governments, private and public sectors, and even, NGOs make use of this medium to great effect, usually by using newsprints to send information to their respective audiences.

There are some magazines dedicated to businesses, professional groups and other industries. There is also the option of publishing in periodical for niche markets such as for toys, textiles, stationery, automobiles, electrical, and computers, etc. The attractiveness and creativity of using magazines make them quite effective as a long-term reference material for people to read whenever they like for as long as they wish-a good publicity option for many organisations to use to send periodical messages.

Publicity through Press

Publicity comes in the form of press releases, features, and background articles. The mode and timing of undertaking PR activities using the press is determined by the PR practitioner in consultation with management. Bearing in mind that the information will be competing with other organisations', your timing of publication should be just right for your own to be noticed.

News Releases

Press releases are used to disseminate news for organisations. Materials supplied to the media should be interesting and factual. It is important to keep the following point in mind when preparing press releases:

- i. It should indicate clearly the name or organisation, address, and telephone number; along with the sender's name and designation, etc.
- ii. The date for release should be indicated
- iii. Content should be newsworthy, error-free and written in a journalistic style and typed on one side of the sheet only
- iv. It should be brief and unambiguous
- v. It should have a headline and should be signed
- vi. It should be released well on time for publication

Editorial / Article Features

Influential PR practitioners who have established good working relationships with media organisations may provide newsworthy background material required in selecting the most suitable media for publishing publicity information in editorials or as special feature articles. A good and newsworthy material is what columnist desire and could be just the right avenue to provide publicity via feature articles to promote products and services of a company.

Feature articles could be used to highlight peculiar problems and the company's products recommended as the solution to the problem. The write up can be done by either the PR practitioner or a well-trained and experience columnist.

Letters to the Editors

Writing letters to editors in the press is another tool for the PR's practitioner to employ to promote the image of their organisation by elaborating on what they think of the organisation in a positive light. Editors also publish feedback from the public, especially letters having a strong point of view well argued.

Television

TV is profoundly an important tool for undertaking mass publicity because it appeals to all the senses. Another characteristic of TV is that it can create dramatic effect and arouse interest. TV serves as an ideal medium for currently developing news to be broadcast to a wide audience. It also affects the socio-economic development of many people. The news is usually supplied by the PR department to a representative from the TV station. Alternatively, PR may be approached by the TV station to provide them with feature news. However, the news feature should not seek to promote sales or look like a commercial so that it can be accepted.

How to prepare publicity material for TV?

The first step is to pick a news topic that is worth reporting. Next, select a producer to film the event. The news clip should not be more than 90 seconds. It is best to present the story in an “inverted pyramid” manner, with the most important news placed at the start and the not – too - important ones placed below in descending order to enable the editor to quickly create the ideal sequence advert.

After filming, add voice cast, music, and text to complete the news file. Another option is to send an edited already-made film with written scripts or instructions describing the visual components for a newsreader to read. When crisis emerge, TV crews may approach your organisation to cover the event. In such circumstances, your responsibility as a PR practitioner would be to assist by giving them access to background information about the crisis. Coverage involving crisis reportage must include management’s viewpoints, as well.

Radio

Like TV, radio can also be deployed quite effectively to achieve the objectives of PR programmes with the added advantage that it is highly mobile compared to the TV.

How to use Radio as a Public Relations medium

News releases should be written in a style befitting radio without much editing by the announcer. News worthy to be broadcast should be releases at intervals throughout the day. RP can dispatch various messages about their companies using radio. Programmes may also be sponsored by the companies to create publicity for their brands.

Films

The PR practitioner needs a working knowledge of film-making to make valuable contribution to the content and quality of the films. The practitioner can contribute by providing the background information, the length of the film, how the film should be presented etc. Films can be used for educating consumers, training employees, for safety precautions, or improve community relations.

New Technologies

There are a variety of new technology options to choose from. Large corporations tend to use sophisticated technologies such as email, teleconferencing, fax, intranet, or video conferencing while local companies rely mostly on posters, bulletin boards, and rural fairs. But more and more local firms are switching to new technologies because the prices are falling and they are now becoming readily available for smaller businesses.

Oral Communication

This mode of communication occurs mainly through phone calls, meeting, public address systems, panel discussions etc. Organisations use oral communication to training employees and educating them about

the company policies. Supervisors also use it to communicate with their subordinates in an informal setting. Other groups of people who make use of oral communication include suppliers and dealers and consumers during PR programmes. It is effective, fast, and cheap but with the disadvantage that the message may be easily forgotten or even misunderstood because there is no opportunity to refer to it for clarification purposes.

Meeting

Meetings involve the coming together of two or more people for a particular purpose. Advance notices about the agenda are often dispatched to the concerned parties before commencing the meeting.

Speeches

The PR department prepares and delivers formal speeches which are normally newsworthy and of great interest to the public. Formal speeches are fairly quick ways to convey information to the public. The speaker for the occasion should be competent and well-trained to perform the function. The time and venue chosen should be suitable for maximum effect. The voice used to convey the message should be well-controlled and punctuated with pauses for dramatic effect and to grab the attention of the listeners. When the message is in relation to some crisis, it should be delivered in a dignified manner.

Printed Literature

Publicity literature comes in the form of house journals, brochures, booklets, annual reports, and direct mail, etc. These are used to inform the public about the company's activities and to persuade them to patronise services or products. We will elaborate of some of these important literature items below.

House Journal

Two types of house journal exist; the internal and external house journals. The internal house journal is used for communicating information to employees while the external one is used to inform external entities such as stockholders and suppliers or other public groups. These two journals may be combined into one to provide information for both groups.

The house journal is an important tool for management to communicate its thoughts to employees and to foster togetherness amongst groups belonging to the organisation. House journals come in newspaper format or take the form of a booklet. The newspaper format is more functional while the booklet forms tend to be more lavish or extravagant.

How to bring out a House Journal

The house journal could be a one-way or two-way communication medium depending on the philosophy of the organisation. A one-way journal tend to focus on providing information about top executives to the employees whereas an open company employing a two-way communication approach requires the flow of information from the organisation to the employees as well as information flow from the

employees to the organisation. Journals published should be interesting and attractive for maximum impact and to grab people's attention. Good interesting topics and titles should do the trick.

Steps for Creating Successful House Journal

- Planning: requires developing a concept that best serves the company
- Organising: When PR is given the go ahead by management, it needs to secure the right staff to do the job. Large or frequent issues require a large number of staff
- Publishing: Try and develop a personal style for writing the house journal
- Distribution: Find out the most ideal way to get the journals to reach the intended target readers. The journals may be distributed at the workplace or to the homes of the readers. Also, provide questionnaires to collect feedback on the contents that the readers liked or disliked to help improve the content in future

Annual Reports

They are communication tools used by corporate firms to convey financial information to shareholders as well as to potential investors. They contain balanced sheets and statements of account as well as the chairman's statements or views. The PR practitioner may not be directly responsible for the annual reports but he/she may suggest themes for the chairman's statement and the format for presenting the report. PR could secure the services of professionals to design an attractive report containing charts, diagrams and photographs of important data and activities using high quality glossy paper. This occasion also presents an opportunity to promote the profile of the company in the director's report.

People who may be interested in the annual report include:

- a) The investing community in general, the potential shareholders who are looking for investing in a suitable company
- b) Banks and financial institutions, etc.
- c) The financial press
- d) The business community

Photographs

Photographs could be used for illustrative purposes. They may come from any event organised by the company. Staff photographers or professional photographers are required to create imaginative and high quality prints.

Brochures

Brochures include pamphlets, flyers, or folders. A brochure is a multi-panel sheet of paper which provides information on a unique subject. A booklet has more pages than a brochure and it is normally stapled and not folded.

Reasons for using brochure and booklets include the following:

- To explain a new concept, product, service, or talk about the functions of a new building
- To describe features of a product and to promote sales indirectly
- To ask for donations

PR personnel are required to know the basics of designing booklets and brochures for them to be able to provide useful guidelines for their production by professional designers. To design an effective brochure, the PR practitioners should first identify the problem that needs to be addressed and craft the manner of dispatching the information to the target recipient.

Publications of brochures and booklets are relatively cheaper and quicker to produce.

Advertising

The conventional definition of advertising is “any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services by an identified sponsor”. It can be classified under two categories. The first, known as product advertising, is used to promote the sale of goods and services. The second type is known as corporate or institutional advertising or PR advertising. This involves buying space and time for advertising or promoting ideas or educating the public about specific issues. Advertising from PR departments is geared to promote positive attitudes of the public towards an organisation and to attract investors and also to promote good employee-employer relations. It is also done to keep government officials informed about activities of the organisation.

The objectives of PR advertising will determine the type of message to send and the media to use for disseminating the message.

Miscellaneous Communication Tools

Other means of communicating information to the public include:

- Stickers, posters, and labels to serve as reminders
- Racks or bins for display of products and window display
- Identification on the pack
- Speciality gifts like calendars, diaries, pens, and key chains, etc.
- Provision of any necessary leaflets and catalogues, etc., to assist a customer's decision to buy.

Direct Mail

Direct mail is highly selective or specific in nature because it is used to address selected group of people. It is cost-effective and flexible in that the number of messages to send can be increased or decreased depending on prevailing circumstances. Direct mail is used to convey all types of messages and announcements. It is personal, it can be friendly and the PR practitioner has total control of the content and the time to send off the message.

Media Relations

It includes activities such as press briefing, press conferences and press visits to facilities. We will elaborate on each of these activities in the subsequent paragraphs below.

Press Conferences

Press conferences are well-planned and organised settings for releasing important news to all media at the same time. Press conferences should not be too frequent unless the news is crucially important and requires discussion between the media and the PR person. If no discussions are required, then a press release will suffice.

Things to consider before holding a press conference include the following:

- Who will address the press conference? Ideally, it should be done by the head of the organisation or a department.
- Make available a press kit which must contain a press background, news release, pictures, literature about the organisation, a writing pad, and a pen or a pencil.
- Make a list of invitees from the media carefully. Decide a venue which is accessible to the media persons. Make arrangements for the transportation of media persons from a convenient place to the venue and return journey.
- Decide the timing. It should neither be too early or too late in the day. The conference should end at such a time that the media persons are able to get back to their place and work for filing the story on time.
- Arrange hospitality.

It is important to have good ongoing relationship with press personalities not only during press conferences but also informally to establish friendly relationships.

Press Briefings

Unlike press conferences, press briefings do not require the elaborate arrangements described above. These releases are used on occasions such as during crisis to clarify situations or events and also to provide accurate information to press people. A written statement from the PR department will safeguard against any entity misquoting the spokesperson of the organisation.

Press Tours

Press tours tend to resemble press conferences in many ways, but in these occasions, the venue is the company's premises. Press tours are done on special occasions. They require meticulous planning and organisation for successful execution.

The PR personnel should consider the following when arranging a press tour:

- List of media men
- Suitable travel arrangements
- Accommodation at site
- Briefing press party at site
- Background Information
- Hospitality

Adequate provision should be made for a representative to accompany the visiting press to ensure everything works according to plan, especially with regards to hospitality for the press entourage.

Exhibitions

They involve events such as international trade fairs and local community events. Exhibitions are designed to promote an organisation's reputation and showcase its products and services to increase patronage and increase its profitability. Exhibitions are also occasions for competing firms to assess the performances of other competitors.

During exhibitions, interest is heightened leading to customers making further inquiries and placing orders for products in a calm environment because the customer is in a relaxed mood. Exhibitions should be planned with the following in mind:

- The objectives to be attained during the exhibition
- Selecting a suitable time for the exhibition
- Preparing a budget for the show
- Designing the right stand and proving display section for posters, videos, murals, and diagrams, etc.
- Provision for publicity, press conferences, literature for participants, and advertising
- Provision for insurance, hospitality, transport, rest rooms, and emergency handling
- Answering visitors' enquiries and receiving feedback from visitors

It should however, be noted that exhibitions are expensive media to engage due to the high costs involved in procuring facilities and the associated logistical and hospitality aspects. Only use this channel when you are absolutely sure that you can reap the maximum benefits it is likely to offer.

Open Days

Organisations use open days as a means of building a stronger relationship with communities and stakeholder and the public. During open days, companies allow visitors to have a tour of their facilities and to see how things are done. To ensure a more pleasant tour, trained guides should be available to answer questions and also provide the visitors with hospitality services before or after the tour, whichever happens to be the most appropriate. It is common for companies which manufacture food products to give away gifts to the visitors in their quest to promote goodwill.

Special Events

Special events include local festival or sponsoring an international event to reinforce important messages that a company needs to communicate to its target market or stakeholders. They are usually undertaken as a form of community relations program and need to have a management group to supervise the event and to provide effective publicity to achieve the objectives of this PR activity.

Assessment**Total Mark: 20**

1. Define the term, 'Public Relations.' 5
2. Define the term, 'Publicity' 5
3. What are the similarities between Public Relations, publicity, and advertising? Name the two main branches of advertising. 5
4. What are the advantages and limitations of exhibitions as a public relations' tool? 5