Dr. Jose Carlos del Ama
PR: Historical Classics and Contemporary Masterpieces

公共关系
历史经典与当代杰作

〔美〕 何塞·德莱玛 著

Dr. Jose Carlos del A

PR. Historical Classics and Contemporary Masterpieces

公共关系
历史经典与当代杰作

〔美〕何塞·德莱玛 著

公共关系:历史经典与当代杰作
PR:Historical Classics and Contemporary Masterpieces:英文
〔美〕德莱玛 著

PR: Historical Classics and Contemporary Masterpieces

Dr. Jose Carlos del Ama

内 容 提 要

  本书提供的重大公关案例,旨在帮助公关领域里的专家学者、高校学生和研究生及广大从业人员解释公共关系这一行业的历史发轨迹和最新发展趋势。

  书的第一部分收集了具有历史里程碑性质的公关事件。读者将从案例中了解这一行业里最重要的一些人物和他们所走过的历史路程。案例涵盖了各种性质的组织,对"危机传播"这一专题予以了特别的关注,主要包括:美国独立战争的公关策略、1851 第一届世博会的公关创举、美国洛克菲勒家族丑闻廓清公关战略、公关之父爱德华·伯内斯的实践、洛克韦尔的"四大自由"公关运动、可口可乐公司反种族歧视的公关广告策划、福特汽车公司与"安全第一"、西班牙走向民主的公关教育之力和 EXXON 的现代危机公关等。

  书的第二部分将重点放在现代的重大国际公关事件。传播技术日新月异的发展打破了原有的国界限制,大大扩展了传统大众传播的染指领域。组织的活动将面对全世界的公众。本书所选择的各个案例反映了组织在应对国际公众方面所表现的前所未有的复杂性。所举五大当代公关杰作包括:公关推倒德国的心理柏林墙、公关刷亮不发达国家的形象、公关世纪杰作——中国申奥成功、互联网公关与反恐怖主义和跨国公关与现代战争等。

  美国的公关实践在国际公关发展史上有着特殊的意义,但本书对别的国家的公关成就也予以应有的关注。比如,本书收集了西班牙、德国、哥伦比亚和中国的重要公关案例。

  本书既可用作高等院校公共关系学课程的教材,也可供专业人士用作公共关系方面的辅导参考书。

Preface

This book's aim is to provide public relations students, practitioners and also scholars with a repertoire of cases that can help them understand or explain both the historical development of the profession and the newest trends in the field.

In its first part, the book gathers some milestones in the PR history. The reader becomes then familiar with such essential names for the profession as Edward L. Bernays or Ivy L. Lee. Some landmark moments in the world of communication, like the infamous propaganda ministry of the German National-Socialist regime, are also analyzed in order to reveal the relationship between public relations and political power. The cases selected for the book cover examples of all possible types of organizations and actors in the process of public relations. Special attention is paid to the subject *crisis communication*, for such extreme situations, in which the existence of the organization is at stake, are ideal to show the benefits of effective communication, or the harm that communication mismanagement can cause.

The contemporary cases chosen for the second part of the book focus on international public relations. In the modern world, the new technologies have enlarged the scope of traditional mass communication and broke all national borders. Organizations now have to develop their activities in front of the eyes of the whole world. Thus, every selected case illustrates the complexity of public relations when dealing with international audiences.

The history of public relations in the U. S. A. is especially relevant. The strong U. S. public relations industry still determines the way the profession is practiced in most parts of the world. However, public relations was not invented in the United States. Nor has this country the sole right for the professional field. Thus, this book analyzes cases of public relations in many other countries, including, for example, Spain, Germany, Colombia and China.

The historical perspective of the book will help the reader better understand the nature of this special communication dynamic that we call public relations. The contemporary cases illuminate the future of the profession, which will be necessarily determined by the new information and communication technologies that have made our global era a reality.

Introduction

One of the most frequent clichés that the researcher in the field of public relations has to face is that this special form of communication is a U. S. invention. It's true that, in this country, public relations have reached an unusual relevance in the different areas of public communication, and that the way public relations are now practiced in the rest of the world follows, in many cases, the model established in the United States. Everything that this country generates and develops has a strong repercussion worldwide, and the creation and implementation of communication strategies, which is what public relations is all about, is not an exception to this trend. However, it would be a gross simplification to limit the study of public relations history to what happened and was developed in the United States.

Effective public relations have been employed for centuries. Already in ancient Greece, the philosophical group of the sophists put their wisdom about communication processes at the disposal of those Athenian citizens who were interested in participating in the public discussion of issues related to the city (POLIS), or needed help to manage their public image or to bolster political ambitions. The sophists helped the contemporary Athenians to generate arguments in order to support a specific position on any given issue. They wrote speeches and gave advice to individuals on how to present themselves, or the cause that they advocated, in public.

The Greek sophists had much in common with our contemporary PR consultants. One of those shared characteristics — not the less important — was the high fees they charged for their services. Some of the sophists were paid 1,000 Drachma (the Greek currency at that time) for a single course, where the average salary for a worker was 1 Drachma a day.

Another characteristic that the original sophists share with their contemporary counterparts, the PR practitioners, is moral flexibility. The sophists thought that, when concerning moral issues, any position could be defended with efficacy if the right arguments were provided. Most of the sophists were not native Athenians. They arrived at this city attracted by its cultural splendor after having wandered for years through practically all the *known world* of that time. In their wandering they observed that moral standards changed from place to place. As a consequence, the sophists developed strong moral relativism, which also characterizes many modern communication professionals. Protagoras (485-411 B. C.), one of

the most important names of the sophist philosophical school, revealed the relationship between language and morality. He described words as filters through which we perceive reality, but that also separate us from that reality. Words, as filters, are not neutral at all. Quite the reverse, they determine the way we perceive objects, people, or events. Our judgment on moral issues may vary depending on the words used to frame them.

The Greek sophists were thrilled at the discovery of the power of language to determine the perception of reality, and they believed, with candid arrogance, to have discovered the ultimate instrument to control the will of the citizens. Gorgias (485-380 B. C.), in the peak of his communication ecstasy, even affirmed that, with the mere use of language, he was able to convert people into slaves. He attributed a kind of magic power to speech and compared its effects on the soul to the "power of drugs over the nature of bodies" (Gorgias, 2001, p. 46).

Plato (427-347 B. C.), who was born in Athens, loathed the sophists and their wisdom, which was becoming more and more popular. First of all, the fact that they charged money for their knowledge irritated him. To sell knowledge represented for him the worst form of prostitution. Then, he resolutely rejected their moral flexibility, which denied the existence of ultimate moral principles. Plato's arguments against the sophists sound pretty much like the current ones used by some scholars and intellectuals against the professionals of public communication. The contemporary discussion focuses, as it did at Plato's time, on the ethical limits of the power that communication might generate.

In addition to his ethical reflections on the use of communication by the sophists, Plato challenged their idea that the power of language and communication could control the broad mass of people. Plato reproached the sophists for their arrogance, which he thought came from their ignorance. Plato realized that it is a sheer illusion to believe that power might allow you to control public opinion. Reversing Gorgia's conviction, Plato (1987) concluded that it is not just impossible to control the people (*demos*) by means of words, but that those who want to achieve political power and social influence will always end up indulging the demands and expectations of the public opinion. Never will power be reached without the support of the people. And never will the social body give power to those who oppose its core values.

This thought will join together the episodes in this journey through the history of public relations. In all the cases selected, we will be able to observe that what was at stake was the economic, social, or political power of the actors involved (individuals, corporations, institutions or states). Power means, in prac-

tice, the ability and capacity to act in the respective fields (politics, society, or the corporate world). Public relations reveals itself as a specific form of public discourse with the aim of acquiring, increasing or protecting economic, social, or political power. Thus, communication is the means to achieve a power that, as Plato suggested 2,300 years ago, will always flow from public opinion. The ability to act sinks dramatically when the moral authority has vanished. And this moral authority can only be achieved if the actors in the process of communication speak and act on the same wavelength as the anonymous mass of citizens that form the public opinion.

Given this broad definition of public relations, it is easy to understand why this specific communication dynamic cannot be regarded as an American invention, even if the term was created in the United States. Every social system will generate a public eye that will scrutinize the words and behavior of all the actors involved in the process of public communication. The more relevance the public debate has in a political system, the more urgent the management of communication between those individuals or institutions involved in the political discourse and their publics will become. And whenever the intellectuals reflect on the nature of political power, they have to discuss in detail the relationship between power and communication.

During the European Renaissance, Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536) and Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), wrote some books that could be regarded as actual public relations treatises. *The Prince* (1532) and *The Education of the Christian Prince*, (1516) contain many elements that Edward L. Bernays could have introduced in his groundbreaking books on public relations. Both authors, who are today considered antagonists, described in those works an archetype, the prince, and discussed in depth how this figure must deal with the different groups that constituted his publics (the plain people, the church, the military, etc). Both Erasmus and Machiavelli observed the paradox that was first studied by Aristotle (384-322 B. C.) in his book *On Rhetoric*, the first systematic treatise on persuasive communication, which states that the surest way to induce cooperation in the members of the public is to adapt the discourse to the characteristics of this public, to adopt both its values and the linguistic means to articulate them. Aristotle's *On Rhetoric* should be on the bedside table of every PR practitioner.

That the best way to enhance the efficiency of persuasive messages is to construct a common ground with the audience remains an axiom in contemporary public relations.

The most effective message will be the one that responds to the wishes, pri-

orities, expectations, values, or anxieties of the audience. This public relations wisdom confirms Plato's idea that those who want to achieve public relevance will have to subordinate their public discourse in one way or another to this social-psychological phenomenon, which I will call public opinion.

Every chapter in this book will be based on a case that represents a specific lesson for the study of public relations. The selection of the cases seeks to avoid an exclusively American orientation, so frequent in public relations literature. In many cases, the reference to U. S. public relations will be inevitable, for some of the names of American PR actors and organizations have a worldwide influence. The historical development of the PR profession would be incomprehensible without a reference to Ivy L. Lee or Edward L. Bernays. However, I try to honor PR contributions outside the United States as well. The book includes cases of public relations in Spain (the NATO referendum campaign of 1986) , China (the bid for the Olympic Games 2008 in Beijing) , the Middle East (Al Jazeera's Web-site to launch an international TV channel in English) , and South America (The public relations function of advertising icon Juan Valdez for 100% Columbian Coffee). Germany will deserve special attention in our look at the history of public relations. This country was a pioneer in the systematic study of public relations, as well as in the implementation of the theories created through scientific research. Germany will also provide us with a perfect instance to study the relationship between public relations and propaganda: the communication strategies of the Nazi regime.

The cases selected in this book also cover the study of public relations in the fields of political and corporate communication, as well as in public and private, profit and non-profit organizations.

All the chapters are constructed on the basis of a similar contents structure. The case study starts out by profiling a problem in a specific historical context. The reference to the historical context is absolutely necessary in order to understand the the public opinion state at the time and place where the case occurs. Once the problem has been stated, the publics, which constitute the target audience of the communication endeavors, are defined. The definition of these target audiences will also help us understand the nature and form of the messages created to achieve the strategic goals, as well as the channels used to deliver those messages to the specific target audiences. Some cases, such as the already mentioned chapter about the Nazi propaganda, will offer us a perfect opportunity to continue the ethical reflection on the relationship between power and communication initiated by Plato in his controversy with the sophists.

Contemporary social and political structures around the world have become extraordinarily complex. Above all in Western representative democracies, public opinion arises as the only legitimate source of political and economic power. In 1998, the most powerful man on the planet, the president of the United States, was about to lose the presidency when his *improper relationship* with Monica Lewinski, which the public opinion may have considered immoral, became public. The president of the U. S. A. escaped with a benevolent judgment because sex is no longer taboo in that society. At least, it is not taboo when sexual intercourse takes place among people of age. If Monica Lewinski had been two years younger, the judgment of the American public opinion, in addition to the outcome of the impeachment process, surely would have been different.

In the corporate world, there are examples of financial giants, like Exxon or Nike, who saw their bottom line endangered when the American public eye started to scrutinize some environmental catastrophes or labor practices that offended sacrosanct idols of the public opinion in Western civilization, such as environment or childhood.

The relevance of public opinion in the American political and social system is the reason for the explosion of public relations in this country. In 1996, the PR practitioners outnumbered the print and audiovisual journalists by 20,000. That means that, in the U. S. A. in 1996, there were 20,000 more people generating news, which is what PR people do, than reporting it. The trend does not seem to be changing either.

As a way of public communication, public relations will always use the available communication channels. At the time of the sophists in ancient Greece, public communication was mostly oral. Therefore, their thinking about effective strategic communication dealt exclusively with public speaking. The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg during the European Renaissance made the written word another means of reaching broad audiences. The development and sophistication of Gutenberg's invention made possible the emergence of the press. Newspapers and magazines became the most effective instrument in spreading ideas and messages. The first chapter of this book shows us how the systematic use of the rising press was one of the factors that made the American Revolution possible. As new mass media was being developed, the public relations practitioners had to adopt them and to adapt their messages to the nature of the channel and, what is very important, to the new social situation created by the emergence of these new channels. The birth of radio and television, for example, had substantial influence on the way people felt and thought, and of course, on the topics

Contemporary social and political structures around the world have become extraordinarily complex. Above all in Western representative democracies, public opinion arises as the only legitimate source of political and economic power. In 1998, the most powerful man on the planet, the president of the United States, was about to lose the presidency when his *improper relationship* with Monica Lewinski, which the public opinion may have considered immoral, became public. The president of the U. S. A. escaped with a benevolent judgment because sex is no longer taboo in that society. At least, it is not taboo when sexual intercourse takes place among people of age. If Monica Lewinski had been two years younger, the judgment of the American public opinion, in addition to the outcome of the impeachment process, surely would have been different.

In the corporate world, there are examples of financial giants, like Exxon or Nike, who saw their bottom line endangered when the American public eye started to scrutinize some environmental catastrophes or labor practices that offended sacrosanct idols of the public opinion in Western civilization, such as environment or childhood.

The relevance of public opinion in the American political and social system is the reason for the explosion of public relations in this country. In 1996, the PR practitioners outnumbered the print and audiovisual journalists by 20,000. That means that, in the U. S. A. in 1996, there were 20,000 more people generating news, which is what PR people do, than reporting it. The trend does not seem to be changing either.

As a way of public communication, public relations will always use the available communication channels. At the time of the sophists in ancient Greece, public communication was mostly oral. Therefore, their thinking about effective strategic communication dealt exclusively with public speaking. The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg during the European Renaissance made the written word another means of reaching broad audiences. The development and sophistication of Gutenberg's invention made possible the emergence of the press. Newspapers and magazines became the most effective instrument in spreading ideas and messages. The first chapter of this book shows us how the systematic use of the rising press was one of the factors that made the American Revolution possible. As new mass media was being developed, the public relations practitioners had to adopt them and to adapt their messages to the nature of the channel and, what is very important, to the new social situation created by the emergence of these new channels. The birth of radio and television, for example, had substantial influence on the way people felt and thought, and of course, on the topics

the people felt and thought about.

In the last cases of the book, which focus on the role of public relations in our contemporary global world, the reference to the Internet will be unavoidable. The characteristics of this new medium will also have repercussions on the media landscape, and as a consequence, on society as well. In fact, the World-Wide-Web represents a turning point in the history of mass communication. Traditional mass media generate One-Way communication, which by nature produces an imbalance between the sender and the receiver of the messages. The senders, in the classic model of mass communication, need access to a sophisticated technological infrastructure. That puts them in a privileged situation: They have the power to create or select the messages that will reach the mass audience. This technological infrastructure demands a highly sophisticated know-how, as well as a huge amount of money.

The Internet destroys this rigid model. First of all, anyone can become a sender of messages online. Neither a sophisticated knowledge, nor a sophisticated technological infrastructure is necessary to start a Web-site, and it can be done with an insignificant amount of money.

Furthermore, the Internet allows a Two-Way flow of communication that is practically impossible with conventional mass media, where the technical nature of the medium makes feedback from the audience impossible — or at least very limited. The Internet has the potential to revolutionize mass mediated communication because it allows immediate and intense feedback. This is the reason why media phenomena, such as the explosion of *blogs*, are changing the functions and fashions of journalism in our contemporary world.

The interactive potential makes the Internet the ideal vehicle for public relations. If this potential is properly exploited, the Internet might become the most effective source of information about our target audiences. Such a constant flow of information from and about specific target audiences will help PR practitioners more accurately define their audiences, more profitably choose their channels, and more effectively design their messages.

References

Gorgias. (2001). Encomium of Helen. In P. Bizzel and B. Herzberg (Eds.), *The Rhetorical Tradition*, G. E. Kennedy (trans). Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin's. (ca. 414 BC).

Plato. (1987). Gorgias. In E. Hamilton & H. Cairns (Eds.), *The collected Dialogues of Plato*. W. D. Woodhead (trans). New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Table of Contents