

SECOND EDITION

# Public Relations

Frank Jefkins

The M & E HANDBOOK SERIES

# *Public Relations*

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SECOND EDITION

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## *Preface to the First Edition*

This book is the first to be written to cover the syllabus of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Higher Certificate examination in Public Relations. The syllabus and examination papers will be found in Appendixes III, IV and V. It should also be helpful to those undertaking communication and business studies courses, for the BEC Higher National core module "Understanding Organisations", for the RSA Diploma for Personal Assistants and as supplementary reading for CAM Certificate and Institute of Marketing students. For those who simply want to know more about PR because it is involved in their daily work, this book should also provide a useful insight into a complex subject.

While the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry examination will be attractive to the increasing number of British students of PR, the questions are capable of being answered by students anywhere in the world; it is not a UK-oriented examination with unfair handicaps for overseas students. In fact, the final chapter of this book is devoted to PR in developing countries and can be as enlightening to British students as it is sympathetic to those in the Third World. It also links with the chapter on export PR. The range of subject matter and the choice of questions in the examination is wide, taking in such associated subjects as photography, printing and marketing research.

Law is not included in the syllabus, but early in the book special attention is paid to British, European and International codes of practice. These important self-regulatory codes not only set the ethical and professional standards, but, clause by clause, they present the broad PR scene and so demonstrate what PR is all about. The British Institute of Public Relations code has fathered similar codes throughout the world.

Both the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry examination and the book reflect world-wide interest in public relations. During the recent difficult years, PR has proved to be an essential communication technique in both the public and

private sectors and in both commercial and non-commercial organisations.

I hope this book will also help to dismiss some common misunderstandings about public relations. It is not a black art, with some curious mystique, or an outlet for charming would-be hostesses or an excuse for excessive hospitality. Credibility is its need: its messages must be believed. It is neither advertising nor propaganda. Public relations is mostly a matter of hard work which requires wide knowledge.

1980

F.J.

### *Preface to the Second Edition*

The success of this book shows that such a specialised topic can fit into a popular series. Its sales world wide also show the increasing interest that is being taken in public relations everywhere. This is simply because PR is about creating knowledge and understanding which is a vital part of development, especially in the 77 countries of the South.

This second edition attempts to introduce some new material, but communication techniques are faced with a North/South dilemma. The North is fast moving out of the industrial era with which much of the South is desperately trying to catch up. As the South moves into the 20th century the North has already opened the door of the 21st. The recession and unemployment of the 1980s marks the transition to the new era, but it has had a retarding effect on oil economies like that of Nigeria. The question is, can the South successfully leapfrog the dying industrial era?

Communicators everywhere have big responsibilities, and as we move from a supply to a demand information situation, of which viewdata, teletext and numerous computer services are the prelude, public relations has its universal value for the new "prosumer".

This book is now of increased importance. Originally, it was written to cover the syllabus of the LCCI Higher Grade Certificate in Public Relations, which could be selected as one of the three subjects for the LCCI Group Diploma in Marketing. Now Public Relations is the compulsory subject for the LCCI Group Diploma in Public Relations. See Appendix II.

1983

F. J.

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## *Public Relations Defined and Distinguished*

### DEFINITIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

**1. Introduction.** Public relations concern any organisation, commercial or non-commercial. They exist whether we like it or not—you cannot decide to have or not have public relations. Public relations consist of all communications with all the people with whom an organisation has contact. An individual also experiences public relations, unless he or she is utterly isolated and beyond human contact.

So misunderstood is public relations that the last place to look for a satisfactory definition is in a dictionary. Let us examine three internationally respected definitions which are familiar to PR professionals.

**2. Definition of the (British) Institute of Public Relations.** "Public relations practice is the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its public."

#### *Analysis*

(a) It is "*the deliberate, planned and sustained effort*"—meaning that PR activity is organised as a campaign or programme and is a continuous activity. It is not haphazard.

(b) Its purpose is "*to establish and maintain mutual understanding*"—that is, to make the organisation understood to others. This mutual understanding is thus between an organisation and its public or rather *publics*, since many groups of people are involved.

**3. The author's own definition.** Public relations consist of all forms of planned communication, outwards and inwards, between an organisation and its publics for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understanding.

*Analysis*

(a) The first part of this definition tidies up the IPR version and specifies that the purpose is not merely mutual understanding but achievement of specific objectives.

(b) The management by objectives method is applied to PR. When there are objectives, results can be measured against them, making PR a tangible activity. This challenges the false idea that PR is intangible. If a PR programme is mounted to achieve a declared objective the result can be observed or measured. If necessary, marketing research techniques can be used to test the degree of success or failure of a PR campaign.

**4. The Mexican Statement.** Following the World Assembly of Public Relations Associations in Mexico City in August 1978, this statement was agreed: "Public Relations Practice is the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisation leaders, and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organisation's and the public interest."

*Analysis*

The special significance of this international definition lies in the beginning and the end.

(a) The Mexican Statement speaks of "analysing trends", which implies the application of research techniques (*see* XIX) before planning a PR programme.

(b) The definition embraces the public affairs and social conscience aspects of an organisation, that is, its responsibility to the public interest. An organisation is judged by its behaviour. Public relations is about goodwill and reputation.

## PR DISTINGUISHED FROM ADVERTISING

**5. Definition of advertising.** The definition of the (British) Institute of Practitioners in Advertising is as follows: "Advertising presents the most persuasive possible selling message to the right prospects for the product or service at the lowest possible cost."

*Analysis*

(a) "Advertising presents the most persuasive possible selling message" through the creative skills of copywriting, illustration, layout, typography, scriptwriting and film-making based on a

theme or "copy platform". The emphasis is on *selling*, which differs from the PR role of *informing*, *educating* and *creating understanding through knowledge*. A major relationship between advertising and PR is that advertising is more likely to succeed when prior PR activity has created knowledge and understanding of the product or service being promoted.

(b) By the use of marketing research to discover who is most likely to buy the product or service, which advertising appeal will provoke the best response and which media will reach most prospects most economically, the advertising can be made most effective.

(c) Following on from (b), the choice and use of media to achieve maximum results at minimum cost will make the advertising cost effective. A good advertising agency uses creative research and media-buying skills to produce economically-productive advertising. The cost of some campaigns may seem huge, but this investment is related to the size of the market, production capacity and the volume of sales (often repeat sales) which are sought.

**6. How does public relations differ from advertising?** Let us consider some of the major differences between these two forms of communication. These distinctions are based on the fact that PR is *not* a form of advertising and is, in fact, a much bigger activity than advertising. Not until this is fully understood will the student have a clear idea or image of PR.

Public relations is neither "free advertising" nor "unpaid-for advertising". There is nothing "free" about PR: it is time-consuming and time costs money. This money may be represented by either staff salaries or consultancy fees. If a story appears in the news column or bulletin, its value cannot be reckoned by advertisement rates for space or time because editorial space and radio or television programme time is priceless.

Advertising may or may not be used by an organisation, but every organisation is involved in public relations. For example, a fire brigade does not advertise for fires or even advertise its services, but it does have relations with many publics.

Public relations embraces everyone and everything, whereas advertising is limited to special selling and buying tasks such as promoting goods, buying supplies or recruiting staff. Public relations has to do with the total communications of an organi-

sation: it is, therefore, more extensive and comprehensive than advertising. On occasions, PR may use advertising—that is why PR is neither a form of advertising nor a part of advertising.

**7. Financial differentiation of PR and advertising.** Yet another difference lies in the finances of the two. There are several ways in which advertising agencies receive their income, but basically the commission system is universal, agencies receiving commission from the media on the space or air time which they buy. The PR consultancy can sell only its manhours and expertise and fees are charged according to the volume of service performed. Moreover, in advertising most of the budget is spent on media, whereas in PR most of the money goes on time, whether this is represented by staff salaries or by consultancy fees.

### PR DISTINGUISHED FROM MARKETING

**8. Definition of marketing.** The definition of the (British) Institute of Marketing is as follows: "Marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably."

#### *Analysis*

(a) Emphasis is placed on the *management* aspect of marketing—that is, the responsibility of top management to market professionally, not sell goods or services haphazardly.

(b) Professional marketing management makes itself responsible for finding out precisely what the market needs (and this may be the absence of some product or service which people would buy if it was supplied) and for satisfying this need if it can be done at a profit.

(c) This is a challenge to business management, some of which may be content to go on making and selling the same things without applying any modern marketing techniques at all. Marketing calls for imaginative enterprise, but it also needs the responsibility of PR-mindedness, for goodwill will be squandered if the pursuit of maximum profits is at the expense of customers. As communicators, marketers and PR practitioners have a lot in common.

**9. Marketing in relation to PR and advertising.** In the commercial world, or private sector of the economy, PR and advertising will be associated with marketing. While marketing is only one

function of a business and PR also has to do with the financial and production functions too, PR can be applied to every part of the marketing mix, of which advertising is but one ingredient. The *marketing mix* consists of every element in the marketing strategy—to mention only a few: naming, packaging, research, pricing, selling, distribution and after-sales services. All of these bear some degree of communication and goodwill. Market education can be a vital PR contribution, on which the success of advertising may well depend.

### PR DISTINGUISHED FROM SALES PROMOTION

**10. Definition of sales promotion.** Sales promotion is the bridge between advertising and sales, assisting media advertising and personal selling to clinch the sale.

#### *Analysis*

(a) Sales promotion consists of “below-the-line” efforts (that is, the use of media other than traditional mass media) to help move goods out of the stores. It is the “push” part of the pull-and-push process, with media advertising “pulling” customers to the point of sale.

(b) Sales promotion may push sales by means of (i) long-term schemes such as regular product demonstrations, as with sewing machine demonstrations in stores, or (ii) short-term merchandising schemes such as money-off offers using flash packs, competitions, free gifts, premium offers of goods at low prices in return for tokens from packs plus cash, and cash refunds if packs are sent in. Merchandising consists of short-term sales promotion schemes.

**11. Sales promotion in relation to PR.** Public relations is sometimes confused with sales promotion. This may be because sales promotion does bring the producer closer to the customer. It is a more personal form of marketing communication than traditional media advertising. While it does have PR aspects—it is foolish for a merchandising offer to cause disappointment as when delivery of a premium offer is delayed—sales promotion is not PR as the definition above should make clear.

## PR DISTINGUISHED FROM PROPAGANDA.

**12. Definition of propaganda.** Propaganda is the means of gaining support for an opinion, creed or belief.

*Analysis*

(a) Propaganda is distinguished by its concentration on matters of the heart and mind. These are emotional, intellectual or spiritual topics such as causes, politics or religion, with which people may or may not agree.

(b) For the recipient of propaganda, there is often little tangible gain, perhaps only some inner satisfaction. The position may be different from the point of view of the propagandist: for example, Hitler's investment of time, effort and money in propaganda resulted in gain of power and religious propaganda may result in expansion of group membership through conversions. Another interesting case was that of Roosevelt's radio talks: he won popular support for his New Deal and the American public enjoyed a psychological uplift even if the New Deal actually failed to produce the economic recovery promised. From this it may be seen that there is no straightforward exchange situation—no goods for money—involved in propaganda, at least as far as the recipients are concerned.

(c) Propaganda may be used for good, bad, indifferent (and some very strange) causes. Thus propaganda, like advertising, is prejudiced in favour of its topic: good PR, on the other hand, should be factual, unbiased and free of self-praise. A news release which is otherwise will be rejected by editors because it will be a "puff", the editorial word for disguised, or even intentional, advertising or propaganda. Sometimes, advertising addressed to wholesalers and retailers is called "trade propaganda", but this misuse of terms should be avoided.

**13. Propaganda in relation to PR.** This is yet another form of communication which is often quite wrongly regarded as PR. The two could not be more different, if only because to be successful PR must be credible, whereas propaganda is liable to invite suspicion or, at least, disagreement. The problem is sometimes to distinguish between the propaganda and the PR elements in information issued by, for instance, government departments. Propaganda would be aimed at keeping the Government in power but PR would be aimed at getting its services understood and used properly.

## I. PUBLIC RELATIONS DEFINED AND DISTINGUISHED

### PR DISTINGUISHED FROM PUBLICITY

**14. Publicity defined.** A simple definition is as follows: publicity results from information being made known.

#### *Analysis*

(a) Publicity is a result.

(b) This result may be uncontrollable and it may be good or bad for the subject concerned. Some personalities receive both good and bad publicity: for instance, Ian Smith was at the same time the "rebel Smith" in the black African press and a hero in the Zimbabwe Rhodesian press. Behaviour has a great bearing on whether publicity is good or bad and PR is very much about the behaviour of individuals, organisations, products and services.

Publicity yields an image and, subject to adequate information, the image of any subject can only be what it truly is. The problem is obtaining information that is complete, accurate and unbiased and ascertaining by some means that it is so; hence it is possible for a personality, for example, to be presented with different images in different papers.

**15. Publicity and advertising.** Publicity is another term which is used very loosely, e.g. "publicity manager" as a superior title for an advertising manager. Publicity and advertising are not the same thing: publicity may be sought and, as in the definition above, gained as a result of information being published or announced.

## IMAGES

There are several kinds of image and we will now consider five kinds, the mirror, current, wish, corporate and multiple image.

**16. The mirror image.** This image is the one people in an organisation, especially its leaders, believe to be the impression outsiders have of the organisation. This could be an illusion bred on wishful thinking because knowledge and understanding of outside opinion is lacking. It is a common situation, often based on "everybody loves us" fantasies. An opinion or image study could reveal that a very different and perhaps unexpected and disconcerting image exists.

**17. The current image.** This is the one held by people outside

the organisation, and it may be based on experience or on poor information and understanding. Public relations deals with a world of hostility, prejudice, apathy and ignorance which could result in an unfair current image. The current image depends on how little or how much people know and in a busy world their knowledge will be less perfect than that of those within the organisation, as, for example, if we take a country, the natives know more about their own country than foreigners living hundreds or thousands of miles or kilometres away. This is the great communication problem of the Third World: the current images of most developing countries are poor in the West, due to apathy and ignorance.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the mirror and the current image can be very different, and this variance may not be appreciated by management. One of the jobs of the public relations officer (PRO) may be to interpret the attitudes of outsiders to management, who may well have false ideas about outside opinion. These outsiders could be important publics: they could be potential staff, customers and potential customers, shopkeepers, politicians, journalists, TV and radio presenters—all kinds of people whose comprehension of the organisation is important. It is not just their good opinion that is necessary—it is also necessary that their impression, their mental picture, of the organisation or its people, products or services is correct, not *favourable*, but correct. A PR image results from a correct impression. A prison is not likely to win a *favourable* impression but at least it can be correctly represented—whether it is a men's or women's, what sort of offender is imprisoned there, whether it is an "open" or a top security gaol, how many convicts share a cell and so on.

**18. The wish image.** This is the desired image, the one management wishes to achieve. Again, it is not so much a favourable or preferred image as a true one. For instance, when Gordon Selfridge opened his department store in Oxford Street, London, many years ago he wanted people to think of his store as a place where they could enjoy shopping as a day's outing, full of colour and pleasure, instead of the usual drudgery. The wish image mostly applies to something new when outsiders are as yet completely uninformed.

**19. The corporate image.** Here we have the image of the



organisation itself rather than of the products or services. The corporate image may be made up of many things such as the company history, financial success and stability, quality of production, export success, industrial relations and reputation as an employer, social responsibility and research record. Guinness has an excellent corporate image whether or not you drink beer and irrespective of your taste in beers. A corporate image is important in financial PR, the success of a new share issue often depending on the corporate image.

**20. The multiple image.** A number of individuals, branches or other representations can each create a particular image which does not conform to a uniform image for the total organisation. There can be as many images as there are, say, salesmen. The problem may be overcome by the use of uniforms, vehicle liveries (decoration), symbols, badges, staff training and in the case of shops by the use of identical shop design, name displays, interior layout and display material, as seen with chain-stores. An airline is a good example of many devices to produce a recognisable *corporate identity*. The liveries of aircraft—such as distinctive tail fin designs—and the dress of air hostesses all contribute to this standard identity.

**21. Good and bad images.** In 14 mention was made of the good or bad publicity enjoyed or endured by public figures, resulting in good or bad current images. It has been argued above that the ideal PR image should only be a true impression based on experience and knowledge and understanding of the facts. It follows that an image cannot be “polished” (since that would distort it). A better image has to be *earned* by putting right the causes of the bad image—whether it be faulty behaviour or faulty information. To attempt to falsify an image is an abuse of PR. There are many erroneous ideas in management and marketing circles—among the people who buy and abuse PR and so help to give it a bad name—that falsifying images is a legitimate task. This is not the case. If PR is to be credible it must avoid false image making. The importance of this stand lies in the fact that the media are prejudiced about PR to the extent of expecting false image polishing. It is not helped when advertising agents, who are so often ignorant about PR, claim that they aim to polish the image of this or that client. PR practitioners make no such claims.