

CUTLIP / CENTER

**EFFECTIVE
PUBLIC
RELATIONS**

Third Edition

Third Edition

EFFECTIVE
PUBLIC
RELATIONS

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Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey

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Library of Congress Catalog Card No.: 64-24066

Printed in the United States of America C-24499

Current printing (last digit):

13 12 11 10

PRENTICE-HALL INTERNATIONAL, INC., *London*
PRENTICE-HALL OF AUSTRALIA, PTY., LTD., *Sydney*
PRENTICE-HALL OF CANADA, LTD., *Toronto*
PRENTICE-HALL OF INDIA (PRIVATE) LTD., *New Delhi*
PRENTICE-HALL OF JAPAN, INC., *Tokyo*

PREFACE

This launches the third edition of a book first published in 1952 and first revised in 1958. In twelve years this book has become widely used as a textbook. There is reason to believe it has had a constructive effect on the professional practice of public relations, both in the United States and abroad. For its wide acceptance, the authors are most grateful. When the first edition appeared, the field of public relations was mushrooming, its function was not clearly defined, and its essentiality not fully accepted. Today, by contrast, the growth is slower but steady, the function is more clearly defined and more widely understood, and the essentiality is seldom questioned. The practitioners of public relations, individually and collectively, have made progress in improving their competence and in raising the ethical level of their work. The growing number of college and university teachers in public relations have had a major role in these advances. These dozen years have brought much progress in public relations; there is need for more. The authors hope that their efforts continue to contribute to this progress.

Our objective has remained constant. As stated in the first edition:

We have endeavored to be comprehensive in our approach, yet not to be trapped into an "umbrella" concept of the public relations function. The content focuses on the role of the practitioner as a specialist in communications, an analyst of public opinion, and as a counselor to administrators in these areas. Behavioristic study of the function will demonstrate that these tasks comprise the responsibilities delegated to most practitioners. There is need to concentrate more on the matters in

which the practitioner may lay justified claim as a specialist. There is ample challenge within this area for the best talent we can muster without ranging far afield for worlds to conquer. We have tried to point this up by dealing with two aspects generally neglected—the *ecology* and the *evolution* of this specialized administrative staff function.

The book has been thoroughly revised for this edition. We have tried to make it more readable and to include the fruits of the experience and research accumulated in this field. The Case Problems, which were introduced in the second edition, have been retained on the advice of teachers who find these a basis of many spirited class discussions. The supplementary readings, based on Scott Cutlip's bibliographic research, have been updated. Fresh examples of public relations practice have been woven into the text where they best serve to illustrate principles and procedures. The rapid growth of public relations around the world in the past decade is recorded in a wholly new chapter on public relations abroad. The increased public scrutiny of the impact of public relations on our society and the redoubled efforts of practitioners to police their ranks are given more adequate attention in this edition; new developments, new tools, and new problems in the practice are also covered more thoroughly. Nonetheless, the basic organization and philosophic approach which characterized the first two editions have been retained because of widespread endorsement by our fellow teachers and practitioners.

The authors have incurred a heavy debt to many people for friendly encouragement, wise counsel, and for information generously provided over these dozen years. Some have been acknowledged in earlier editions, and only a few new debts contracted in preparing this edition can be acknowledged here.

In preparing this revision, Scott Cutlip both enlarged and extended his indebtedness to many colleagues, former students, and friends. He is particularly grateful to these persons for help on this edition: Professor Percy Tannenbaum of the University of Wisconsin; Anand Akerkar of Bombay, India; Erwin Böll of Bonn, Germany; Robert Lindsay of the University of Minnesota; Miss Clara Meyers of the European Common Market staff; Philip C. Minter of Sydney, Australia; Allan W. Ostar, Washington, D.C.; Lt. Col. William R. Stroud and Maj. Gen. George V. Underwood, Jr., of the U.S. Army; Joaquin Maestre of Barcelona, Spain; and Miss Elma Williams and Roy K. Wilson of the National Education Association.

In editing the second edition preparatory for this one, Allen Center was reminded of the values in practical experience gained through the years at the Parker Pen Company, Motorola, Inc., and the Leo Burnett Co., and from the exchange of professional views with colleagues in the Public Relations Society of America. In the course of this revision he is particularly indebted to his secretary, Mrs. Perry Frangos, for her invaluable assistance.

The authors believe that no textbook can be more effective than those who translate it for students. We believe that those who teach public relations should be singled out, applauded, and encouraged. For these reasons we wish to salute the teachers who have used this book the past decade or so and who

have gone beyond normal call of duty to offer us thoughtful suggestions for its improvement. Specifically, we salute Professors Ernest F. Andrews, State University of Iowa; Marion K. Browne, Youngstown University; Raymond W. Derr, Bowling Green State University; Edwin Emery, University of Minnesota; Wayne Hodges, Cornell University; Paul V. Peterson, University of Omaha; Frazier Moore, University of Georgia; Walter Seifert, Ohio State University; Raymond Simon, Utica College of Syracuse University; William Taylor, Kent State University; R. H. Wherry, Pennsylvania State University; and James R. Young, West Virginia University; also to Professors Stewart Harral of the University of Oklahoma and Fred E. Merwin of Rutgers University, who read the manuscript for the first edition, and to Professor John V. Hinkel of George Washington University, who read the manuscript for the second edition.

Scott M. Cutlip
Allen H. Center

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Chapter One

CONTEMPORARY

PUBLIC

RELATIONS—

AN

INTRODUCTION

The public relations function is the planned effort to influence opinion through acceptable performance based upon two-way communication.

Public relations, as a management concept and as a staff function in organizations, has grown rapidly over the past three decades. This rapid development comes as a result of the increasing complexity of modern society and the growing insights into what motivates individuals and groups. Gaining the support and cooperation of others through persuasion is part of the day-by-day business of every organization—government agencies, business firms, labor unions, universities, and welfare agencies. Public relations has become a commonplace term in the language and thought of twentieth-century America. It is a part of our daily conversation, a standard topic on convention programs, and an important factor in contemporary decision making. The essentiality of public relations is seldom debated today. Even so, the term is not always understood. This reflects the fact that public relations is still in the fluid state of defining itself. The function embraces whatever it is assigned to do, and this varies widely.

A wide variety of activities parades under the banner. There is still some difference between the function as defined in textbooks and the function as practiced. The literature and shoptalk of the craft are filled with an abundance of definitions. Some lack universality; others are too broad. Many define PR as it ought to be; not as it sometimes is. As a term and as a vocation, it means different things to different people. Nonetheless, the clear outlines of a mature, accepted concept are emerging.

The practice is frequently held out as a cure-all for the ills and prob-

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lems which confront organizations and individuals. Tavern owners are warned to "avoid mistakes in public relations or be voted out of business." Industrial executives are advised that "sound public relations is the 'only salvation of free enterprise.'" Union members are exhorted to improve their public relations if they are to stave off antiunion legislation. Conservationists are counseled that "wildlife management cannot function in America without public support achieved through public relations."

On the other hand, public relations continues to be scorned as press-agentry and worse. An editor tells his readers, "if you want to get plausible disguises for unworthy causes, hire a public relations expert." A high public official once described public relations practitioners as "pitch men, complete with Harvard accent and trick polls." A newspaper columnist once wrote, wryly, that "public relations is only an aristocratic term for publicity or press-agentry." A major United States newspaper calls public relations "a parasite on the press." Such sweeping charges are generally outmoded and unfounded. However, the activities of an unscrupulous few on the fringes of the practice tend to give such accusations validity in the public mind.

Public relations thinking has served to deepen the sense of social responsibility in our public enterprises. It has contributed to public welfare. It has improved the communications required in our society. Public relations thinking is a requirement for every successful administrator. Discussing the requirements of the Presidency, Peter Drucker asserts: "All our effective Presidents were expert at public relations, untiring propagandists for themselves and their ideas."

The calling, like most professions, suffers from the fact that its misdeeds are more widely heralded than are its accomplishments. Practitioners are, from time to time, identified with unworthy causes. Some of the practices labeled "public relations" are dishonest. Some are manipulative. Some are merely inept. But, on balance, the constructive far outweigh the harmful. All the publicity inevitably given to malpractice should not blind the professionals or the public to the essentially valuable contributions. The specialized knowledge and skills of the calling are available to fools, knaves, and saints alike.

Even among those who view public relations as a useful function in the direction of today's large enterprises, a few misconceptions persist. A common understanding of public relations would put an end to the belief that public relations is a black magic which will make people think favorably of an organization whether such opinions are deserved or not. That it consists mainly of getting favorable press reports about an organization and of suppressing the unfavorable is another misconception. No one can become an expert merely by having the tag pinned on him. There is need for a wider understanding of the basic fact that public relations does not constitute a handy umbrella to protect an institution against a storm of unfavorable public opinion.

A PROBLEM OF SEMANTICS

That the term *public relations* is used in at least three different senses adds to the confusion. These are: (1) relationships with individuals and groups which compose the general public; (2) the ways and means used to achieve favorable relationships; (3) the quality or status of an institution's relationships. This one term, *public relations*, cannot be used to label both *means* and *ends* without creating confusion.

Clarity will replace confusion, in part, if the term is restricted to describing the *planned effort to influence opinion through acceptable performance and two-way communication*. Other needs for the term will be met if an institution's relations with various publics are labeled *public relationships*. Little is to be gained by creating artificial terms to serve these needs. This text will use the term *public relations* to encompass the performance and communications used to build profitable *relationships with the public*. Incidentally, although the term *public relations* is plural, it is used in the singular.

CURRENT DEFINITIONS

What, then, are the current definitions? *Webster's New International Dictionary*, Third Edition, defines public relations thus:¹

1. The promotion of rapport and goodwill between a person, firm, or institution and other persons, special publics, or the community at large through the distribution of interpretative material, the development of neighborly interchange, and the assessment of public reaction. . . .
2. (a) the degree of understanding and goodwill achieved between an individual, organization, or institution and the public. (b) the application of the techniques for achieving this relationship.
3. (a) the art or science of developing reciprocal understanding and goodwill. (b) the professional staff entrusted with this task.

Public relations is often confused with and used as a handy synonym for some of its functional parts, such as publicity, press-agentry, propaganda, and institutional advertising. These may be parts of the whole of public relations, but the sum of the parts does not equal the whole. Reflection on these definitions will make it clear that, thus defined, publicity, press-agentry, propaganda, and advertising become tools of public relations, not its equivalent. For example, when someone in Indian headdress sends up the smoke signal "Give" on Michigan Avenue during a Red Cross fund campaign, this

¹ By permission. From *Webster's New International Dictionary*, Third Edition. Copyright 1961 by G. & C. Merriam Company.

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is not public relations. It is an act of press-agentry, although it may be part of a PR program.

Author Robert Heilbroner has commented on the difficulty of definition. "In a word, public relations covers a lot of acreage—blurring out into advertising, slopping over into selling, dipping down into publicity, and touching—or at least aspiring to—the 'making' of public opinion itself."

One of the frequently quoted definitions is one fashioned by *Public Relations News*: *Public relations is the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance.* Implicit in this definition is the threefold function of the professional practitioner (1) to ascertain and evaluate public opinion, (2) to counsel management in ways of dealing with public opinion as it exists, and (3) to use communication to influence public opinion. The practitioner is essentially a specialist in communications. More ambitious claims are often made for him. His work has been variously described as "human engineering," "social engineering," or "the engineering of consent." Use of such terms is akin to fencing in the moon.

Professor Byron Christian defines PR as the "conscious effort to motivate or influence people, primarily through communication, to think well of an organization, to respect it, to support it, and to stick with it through trial and trouble." There are shorter ones. "Doing the right thing and getting credit for it." "Good conduct coupled with good reporting." "Earned recognition." There are platitudinous ones. "Human decency which flows from a good heart." Most definitions embrace the compound principle of good performance made widely and favorably known. PR, a short-cut term to refer to professional practice, is often defined thus:

P for PERFORMANCE plus R for RECOGNITION equals PR.

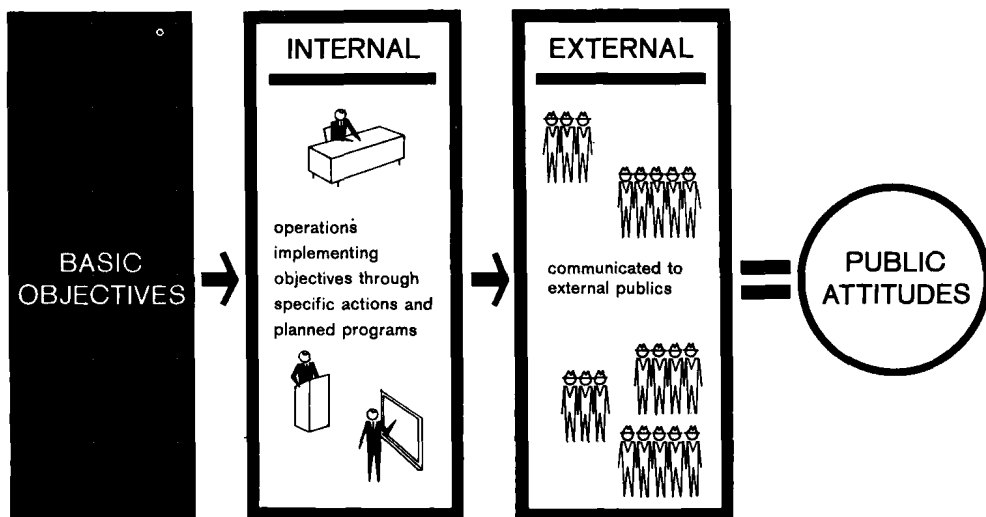
Another way to define PR is to put it as a formula:

X (the deed) plus Y (the interpretations of the deed)
equals Public Attitudes.

This is grounded in the elemental fact that we often are more influenced by the way an event is interpreted than we are by the event itself. The act of a steel company in raising its prices can be interpreted as a necessary move to insure adequate profits, or it can be interpreted as a harmful act inducing inflation. Much of the public relations practitioner's effort goes into putting the best possible interpretation on the acts of those identified with his institution—acts which these persons take in pursuit of the organization's mission.

Fundamentally, it is the performance of those identified with an organization as they carry out the organization's objectives that eventually cumulates in public attitudes toward the organization. This is shown in the chart on page 5.

Such definitions offer sound approaches. But they also serve to confuse



and blur what the function embraces, where it fits in the administrative scheme, and who is responsible for it. This confusion will be cleared away if we understand the distinction between public relations as an *operating concept of management* and public relations as a *specialized staff function in management*.

The first is a static, general operating principle which guides administrators to a greater or lesser degree and is the responsibility of every person identified with an enterprise. The President's "People to People" program for international understanding is a dramatic example.

The second is a dynamic, specialized function for which managers hire skilled practitioners. An illustration is the training of tourists to carry out the "People to People" idea of making every American a good ambassador abroad. The administrators of an organization must be responsible for its *public relationships*. But these administrators need and use the skills of PR practitioners.

THE MANAGEMENT CONCEPT

In today's interdependent society, all institutions are invested with public responsibilities. They must accept accountability for all of their actions that affect others. Full acceptance by public enterprises—profit and nonprofit alike—of their public obligations to those whom they serve or affect is far from realized. But the trend in this direction is clear. As one of the nation's business leaders put it: "We know perfectly well that business does not function by Divine Right, but, like any other part of our society, exists with the sanction of the community as a whole. The interests of the community are in turn