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**PUBLIC
RELATIONS**

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PUBLIC RELATIONS

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PREFACE

The time is long gone since public relations was only for the rich and powerful. It is no longer the special preserve of corporations that can afford public relations departments as part of their marketing effort, or can indulge themselves in the retention of "consulting firms." In fact, it has not been that way for some time now.

Today, public relations is everyone's business. Up and down Main Street, there is not a private enterprise or a nonprofit organization to which the techniques of public relations cannot be applied. From car dealer to children's home, from bookstore to public library, from paper mill to ballet theater—all demand the nourishment of well-managed public relations. Lacking it, these enterprises often wither before our eyes.

It seems to me that today every business student should go forth armed with a working knowledge of public relations. Though the student may never see Madison Avenue or the public relations department at General Motors, an understanding of public relations can add measurably to what he or she brings to an organization. If a person envisages a career in marketing, a knowledge of public relations techniques and methods is likely to be welcome in most firms.

In a world of work that is becoming increasingly skill-conscious, especially as far as recent college graduates are concerned, public relations is a salable skill. Just how salable can be demonstrated by a visit to a local manufacturing plant, a bank, a hospital, a department store, a museum, or an

art gallery. (A chat with the leading politician in town might be instructive too.) The visitor will quickly discover that there is no coordinated public relations program, or that any effort in that direction is in the hands of a well-meaning amateur.

Cities of under 750,000 possess hundreds of businesses and institutions, every one of which might profit from being "thought better of." Yet a glance at the Yellow Pages of the local phone book will disclose that there are relatively few public relations counselors offering their services. The list of specialists becomes even shorter when one takes into account the local advertising agencies, which often claim a public relations capability.

The need, and thus the opportunity, is there—whether it be as a full-time public relations consultant, a company public relations director, or a member of the marketing department with an extra skill possessed by no one else.

But there is another need the person with public relations knowhow is going to have to satisfy, and that is the understanding and appreciation of what properly applied public relations can do for an organization. Lack of understanding of the uses of public relations along Main Street is astonishing and disheartening. It is, as they say, a challenge and an opportunity.

One would hope then that many more colleges and universities will insist that business students gain a grasp of the subject. That is why this text has been constructed to meet the requirements of a wide spectrum of students, from two-year college students whose focus is business-related to MBA candidates. The first 10 chapters are devoted to the mechanics of public relations—the skills and knowledge that must be commanded before one can properly function as a public relations person. We then examine five areas—sports, business, entertainment, education, and product promotion—to see how public relations functions in each.

Every chapter begins with an *overview and goals* preview of the chapter and concludes with a *summary* and a list of *key terms*. Each chapter also includes a real experience (*The Way It Happened*) that illustrates public relations principles in action, as well as a *personal project* that will enable students to apply the lessons they have learned. *Readings* for each chapter have been selected to broaden understanding.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to the many people who offered their suggestions, particularly Joe Luter—a public relations professional typical of the many who serve the small, local business.

The editorial staff of the *Florida Times-Union* has been most generous in supplying samples of releases. The dozens of organizations and businesses that have granted permission to reproduce the public relations material deserve thanks as well.

I would also like to thank acquisitions editor Read Wickham, production editor Joan Foley, and copyeditor Jeannine Ciliotta of Prentice-Hall for their efforts in putting together this book.

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1

THE “HOW DO THEY FEEL ABOUT US” BUSINESS

OVERVIEW AND GOALS

In this chapter we seek to gain a sense of what the business of public relations is all about. When you have completed this chapter, you will be able to

Appreciate the dimensions of public relations.

Understand why relations with our publics are so important to all of us.

See the vital relationship between public relations and performance.

Understand the roles played by attitudes, perceptions, and opinions.

Public relations is concerned with how people feel about issues, products, and individual or corporate personalities. Perhaps a better term for it would be *public relationship*, because what we are doing is building relationships—quite intimate relationships sometimes—with a great many dif-

FIGURE 1-1 Publicizing a state for industrial purposes is a special kind of public relations work demanding a high level of creative ability. The organization responsible for selling the state for industrial development usually works under the state department of commerce, in this case, it is the Florida Division of Economic Development. Letters, brochures, advertisements—all communications material—sent out by this division will go to sophisticated prospects that include some of the largest and most successful corporations in the United States. Anything less than “first class” simply will not do when approaching these people. Here the Florida Division of Economic Development reprints three of its award-winning ads, which ran in such publications as *Business Week* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

FREE YOUR ENTERPRISE.

...to find in Florida, where a self-reliance and the highest of business standards are maintained. ...

FLORIDA
Free Enterprise

FLORIDA

Hollywood weather without Hollywood overhead.

...to find in Florida, where a self-reliance and the highest of business standards are maintained. ...

FLORIDA
Free Enterprise

WESTINGHOUSE, HARRIS CORP. AND UNITED TECHNOLOGIES DIDN'T COME TO FLORIDA FOR VACATION.

...to find in Florida, where a self-reliance and the highest of business standards are maintained. ...

FLORIDA
Free Enterprise

1981 FIRST PLACE AWARD

Axy

Presented in recognition of the... American Advertising Federation

Credit: Florida Department of Commerce.

ferent kinds of people. Because our subject is so broad, if we define it at all, we must define it in simple terms.

Who are the people who wish to build relationships? Almost any person or institution you can think of: the Republican party, your local town council, U.S. Steel, a pop singer, the NAACP, the Ku Klux Klan, your own college. With whom do we wish to build our relationships? Registered voters, stockholders, members of Congress, alumni—in short, "the public" in all its infinite variety. How do we go about building relationships with these people? That, you will discover, is what this book is about. And here too, there is great variety. So let us apply a broad brush. *Public relations* is having relationships with people.

Given this definition, it can be said that we are all in public relations. The student sitting in front of you who has not done his homework has a concern. He would like the teacher and the rest of the class not to get the impression that he is a numbskull. The student to your right may have a public relations problem too. She is going to present a report, and wonders if it will go well. She is on the alert for comments and responses. She will be delighted if one of her friends says to her, "Marge, you certainly speak well—and I liked what you said." That's a very good "relation" to have with your public.

Of course, we *all* want people to think well of us. As Maslow and other psychologists have found,¹ the *need* for love, esteem, affection, and respect is as real and natural as breathing. When others, in their words and actions, accord us love and respect, we feel good. It's nice to feel good about yourself, isn't it? And it's not nice to feel bad. Therefore we tend to act in relation to our public in ways that will gain us affection and esteem, and thus make us feel good. How do we do this? By offering love and respect to others! In what we say and what we do—in everything that touches the lives of others—we behave in such a way as to deserve their esteem and affection. It is as though each person in our lives were a mirror, and in that mirror is reflected back to us a picture of that person who deserves to be so highly thought of. No wonder public relations people are so concerned with "images"!

Companies, too, tend to act like people in their relations with their respective clienteles. Your local bank wants your affection and esteem, and it works for it. (It did take banks a little longer than most retail businesses to discover that it is good *business* to be nice to people.) That is why the teller is bright and cheerful and gives the impression that you are one of the bank's favorite customers and that the bank is delighted to be able to serve you. From the bank president down to the youngest employee, all are aware of the importance of your feelings about them and the bank. They hope you will walk out the door feeling very good about them.

¹Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954).

“Feeling Good” Is Just the Beginning

As you discovered quite some time ago, when people care for you—that is, regard you as a nice person—everything seems to go smoothly. Your relationships with them are likely to be much more relaxed and rewarding. Mutual trust and respect, and even affection, make it far easier for us to get along with one another. On the other hand, we are apt to be reserved with someone we either don't know, or instinctively distrust.

I'm sure you can see how this principle applies just as readily to business organizations as it does to individuals. If a business gains your respect and affection, you feel good about that firm. It will then be just that much easier for the business to get along—that is, do business—with you. If the firm performs badly, it is likely to lose a customer. We need to be liked and respected not simply so that we can bask in the glow of being “popular” or “highly regarded,” but also because we see beyond the immediate need and recognize that there are consequences as well. So it is with business firms. Westinghouse seeks to “keep your trust” (that is, your respect) because consumer acceptance of its products is important. The bank seeks to gain your friendship because when it begins a drive for Christmas Club memberships, you are going to be a logical and, it hopes, willing customer. At Sears, your returned merchandise will be accepted cheerfully and efficiently not just to make you “feel good” about the company, but to help keep you as a loyal customer.

Images Lead to Perceptions

Whether as persons or as business institutions, these carefully nurtured images we reflect cause others to perceive—to “see us”—in certain ways. We carry with us our *perception*; that is, what we see, of a certain event, place, or person. In public relations, this is something we have to be careful about. We are in the business of creating images and reflecting them, but sometimes people look in our mirrors and see things we do not expect them to see. Sometimes of course they see things we do not want them to see.² So part of your job is to make certain that your mirror reflects you or your clients accurately and does not distort you or them.

If you do not believe that people all see things somewhat differently, you might ask the members of your class what they think of the Cadillac car. You will find that what they *perceive* ranges from delightful to detestable. Almost everyone will use a different word or phrase to describe what he or she sees in a Cadillac. A Cadillac dealer of course hopes all of us will perceive the Cadillac as being “the very best.”

²It is widely held that the television camera is the most pitiless of “mirrors.” It reveals not only our skin blemishes, but our blemishes of character as well.

Sometimes Perceptions Are Prepackaged

Occasionally it is easy for us to accept ready-made perceptions. We think things or people ought to be a certain way, and that becomes the way they are. The trouble is, frequently they are not.

We tend to cut things from the same pattern. We create *stereotypes*. Star football players are "dumb jocks." Professors are absent-minded. And little old ladies are sweet, kindly, and gentle. But as you have observed, there are plenty of athletes who go on to graduate school; there are professors with all the facts at their fingertips; and how about that sweet little old lady down the street? It may be that she has a penchant for shoplifting, violates the health code by keeping 25 cats, and has never paid a cent of income or property taxes.

"Preformed" perceptions are something the public relations person has to deal with every day. There are many ways of dealing with them, as you will learn. But there is another kind of perception that gives us the most trouble of all, and that stretches our ingenuity to its utmost. This is the perception that is "cast in iron."

Cast-Iron Perceptions

You will often meet people whose perceptions are almost immovable. No matter how much proof you present, they will still refuse to believe that the moon is *not* made of green cheese. They do not want their perceptions changed—and often for very good reasons. We do not wish to perceive our football team as a bunch of dirty players. We do not want to see our favorite singer in an unfavorable light.

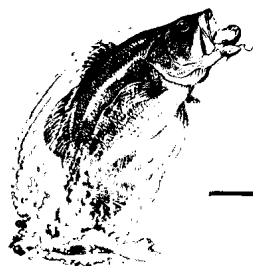
Galileo once got himself into a great deal of trouble with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Despite his scientific proof, it was simply inconvenient for the Church at that time to accept the perception of the earth as revolving around the moon. And you remember the trouble Columbus had with his sailors? They had the unshakable perception of the world as being flat, and had no desire to discover where the outer edge was.

In Chapter Three we discuss some of the characteristics of the people with whom we have public relations. There we will learn that there are often deep-seated psychological reasons for resisting change in perceptions. That pal of yours who insists that *his* brand of beer is best, and won't even sample another brand, is *not just being stubborn*.

Attitudes Affect Perceptions

Very often hardened perceptions result in hardened attitudes. These are extremely difficult for the public relations person to change, as one famous marketing psychologist has pointed out: "No successful advertising can ignore

FIGURE 1-2 In this news release from the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, we see an excellent example of how in public relations we have to "make things happen." The competition to select an artist and subject for the year's waterfowl stamp is of good reader interest, especially for sportsmen, and should get a good play on the sports page. Note that 146 entries were received, indicating considerable interest on the part of artists. It is interesting, too, that this annual competition is well established in its third year, and apparently assured of continuing and growing interest.



for immediate release

1/20/82

NEWS RELEASE

florida game and fresh water fish commission

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CABLE'S RINGNECKS CAPTURE STAMP

TALLAHASSEE - When the votes were cast, it was a Florida resident this year whose work was selected to grace the 1982-83 Florida Waterfowl Stamp.

Tampa-based artist Lee Cable's painting of three ring-necked ducks was selected as the winning design by members of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. Some 146 entries were received in the competition, now in its third year. The selection was made at the January meeting in Tampa.

Thompson Phillip Crowe of Nashville, Tenn, took second place with his painting of a Labrador retriever holding a ring-necked duck while Bob Binks of Daytona Beach placed third in the overall ratings with a portrait of a blue-winged teal.

Cable will receive no monetary remuneration from the Commission for his painting. However, judging by the experience of past winners, he should receive substantial financial gain from sale of limited edition prints of the design.

A native of Ohio, Cable came about his love for the outdoors from hunting and fishing jaunts taken with his father around the family farm.

He had formal art instruction with Martin Wogaman, a noted figure painter. After a stint in the Air Force, he and his wife settled in Greenville, Ohio where he worked as an art director. They later moved to Florida where he worked for a time with a Lakeland advertising firm and then with the Tampa Times.

While at the Tampa-based newspaper, Cable's interest in wildlife art began to flourish. He started writing and illustrating stories on wildlife which appeared in publications like Florida Sportsman and the Tampa Tribune.

In 1975 he made the decision to turn fulltime to wildlife art and his decision has been a good one. He has had several successful shows and won several state awards. Each summer, the couple and their three children travel to Colorado where the artist spends time photographing and painting animals in their native setting.

(MORE)

Credit: Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission.