

University Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahya - Jijel

Faculty of Law and Political Science

School of Political Science

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Professor: Mohammed Kara

## **Public Relations Management**

It seems obvious that a discipline called public relations should be focused on relationships.

As a well-known definition from a classic public relations textbook puts it:

**‘Public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends.’**

This definition – from Cutlip, Center and Broom’s *Effective Public Relations*, first published in 1952 and still in print in its eleventh (international) edition – presents public relations management as relationship management. What’s more, the definition explains why this should matter: an organisation’s survival depends on these relationships.

### **What Is Public Relations (PR)?**

Public relations (PR) is the set of techniques and strategies related to managing how information about an individual or company is disseminated to the public, and especially the media. Its primary goals are to disseminate important company news or events, maintain a brand image, and put a positive spin on negative events to minimize their fallout.

PR may occur in the form of a company press release, news conference, interviews with journalists, social media posting, or other venues.

Every individual or entity operating in the public eye faces the spread of information about them or their practices to the public. While public relations is an industry unto itself, any attempt to portray oneself in a certain way to others can be considered a form of public relations.

Although not inherent in the definition, PR is often thought of as “spin,” with the goal being to present the person, company, or brand in the best light possible. PR differs from advertising in that PR attempts to represent the image of a person or brand in ways that will appear organic, such as generating good press from independent sources and recommending business decisions that will incur public support.

## Types of Public Relations

Public relations is often divided into different agencies or departments. Each department is specifically suited to handle a specific aspect below:

- **Media relations** is the emphasis of forging a strong relationship with public media organizations. A media relations team often works directly with external media by directly delivering them company news, providing validated-content sources, and being accessible for public comment on other news stories.
- **Production relations** is closely related to the direct operations of a company. This department supports broad marketing plans and is often related to specific, one-time endeavors such as the launch of a new product, a special campaign, or management of a major product change.
- **Investor relations** is the oversight of the relationship between the company and its investors. This aspect of public relations handles investor events, oversees communication of the release of financial reports, and handles investor complaints.
- **Internal relations** is the public relations branch between a company and its employees. Internal relations pertain to counseling employees, ensuring all workers are satisfied with their working conditions, and mediating issues internally to avoid public disclosure of dissatisfaction.
- **Government relations** is the connection between a company and related governing bodies. Some public relations departments want to forge a strong relationship to provide feedback to politicians, sway decision makers to act in specific ways, and ensure fair treatment of the company's clients.
- **Community relations** is public relations focused on brand and reputation within a specific community. The community could be physical (i.e., a specific city) or nonphysical (i.e., the dog-owner community). This branch of public relations keys in on the social niche of the community to align itself with its members.
- **Customer relations** is the bridge that connects the company and its customers. Public relations often involves handling key relationships, conducting market research, understanding the priorities of its customers, and addressing major concerns.

## Public Relations vs. Marketing

Marketing is sometimes more squarely focused on driving sales, promoting products or services, and ensuring financial success. Meanwhile, public relations is sometimes more focused on managing the reputation of a company or brand.

Both departments may embark on very similar types of activities. For instance, both may interact with customers to garner feedback. From a more direct marketing lens, this information is used to better understand sales trends, product demands, and ways to generate more sales. From a more direct public relations lens, this information is used to understand customer satisfaction, ensure customers are happy, and make sure any dissatisfaction is managed quickly.

## **Public Relations vs. Advertising**

Advertising is the act of garnering public attention, often through the use of various types of media. A company may want to advertise to promote a product, announce expansion into a new market for a growth company, or reveal pricing changes.

While advertising is the intentional act of trying to be in the spotlight, public relations is a more strategic and thoughtful approach about how a company should be interacting with internal and external stakeholders. Sometimes, it may be in the company's best interest to "lay low" and strengthen its relationship with the public by not being front and center.

## **Public Relations vs. Communications**

Public relations and communications are heavily intertwined. Both involve portraying information outwardly in hopes of creating a brand, image, or relationship that fosters value. Communications may be a separate department within a company solely responsible for written or verbal comments issued internally or externally.

One potential difference between public relations and communications is the exchange of information. Sometimes, public relations is a one-way channel that imposes information in an attempt to have a more favorable public image. Communications may be more rooted in the two-way functionality of receiving feedback and making changes based on information collected. In general, most companies will see overlap between public relations and communications.

## **What Is the Primary Role of Public Relations?**

Public relations often boils down to maintaining the image of a company, individual, or brand. Public relations creates media, connects with external media, crafts public opinion, and ensures customers have a positive disposition toward the company's brand.

## **What Skills Do You Need for PR?**

Public relations specialists often have strong communication skills. Their role is to absorb information, process how it may impact a company's image, and determine how to externally communicate to shift this image. Public relations specialists often forge relationships with many different types of people, including key customers, government officials, and external media.

## **Why Is Public Relations Important?**

Customers make decisions for a number of reasons. One is the relationship they feel they have with a company. If a company has a negative image or is ensnarled in a controversial public issue, a customer may no longer feel as connected with the brand, image, and product. Public relations often manages this brand and ensures that customers, employees, investors, and other external parties have a positive disposition to continue involvement with the company.

### **Who Uses Public Relations?**

Public relations is useful for any party that wants to have a positive public image. Most often, corporations and publicly traded companies will embark on public relations. A company may have a different public relations team or public relations strategy for specific brands or products. Also, individuals such as celebrities or high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) may have private public relations teams. These teams are used to maintain a positive public image as well as handle media requests.

### **The Bottom Line**

Public relations (PR) is the techniques and strategies for managing how information about an individual or company is disseminated to the public and media. The goals are to disseminate important company news or events, maintain a brand image, and put a positive spin on negative events to minimize their fallout.