UNIT 5 : PR AND ORGANIZATION

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5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- discuss the role of Public Relations Officer in an organization
- outline the duties and responsibilities of a PRO
- explain the qualities which are important to be a good PRO
- discuss the role of PRSI in the PR profession in India

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we have already explained the basic concept of public relations and why it is important in the present day life. We have also discussed the growth and development of modern PR. In this unit we would try to explain to you the PR setup in an organization, duties and responsibilities of a Public Relations Officer, followed by suggestions as to how you have to prepare yourself to be a good PRO.

Public relations is an essential tool of modern management. The effectiveness and success of the Public Relations programme of an organization largely depends on the calibre of the personnel entrusted with the job. The PRO may be pertinently compared to a driver of the organization. Basically a PRO should be a very good communicator. He

has to communicate with the internal as well as external publics of the organization.

This unit will concentrate on the activities, functions and responsibilities of a Public Relations Officer, who deals with multifarious activities to build a good image of the organization and to make good public relations with the publics of the organization. In the last unit of this course, that is Unit – 6, we will introduce to you the various tools and methods of PR.

5.2 PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

The Public Relations Officer, popularly known as PRO, is primarily a communicator. He has to communicate the ideals and policies of the organization to the public through various media such as the press, radio, film, oral communication, exhibition etc. The PRO must have a thorough knowledge and experience in mass media operations so that he can handle them effectively.

The PRO may be highly experienced in writing for the newspapers, magazines and other printed media,But it may be too much to expect the PRO to have a complete mastery over all media. He should know how to make use of them for effective results.A PRO must have the ability to plan and execute the combined use of all those PR tools best suited to his purpose.

Public Relations Officer – Qualities, Duties and Responsibilities

Public Relations is an essential tool of modern management. The success of a Public Relations programme can be the calibre of the personnel entrusted with the job. The PRO is like a driver. A good driver has a master skill on driving, but he may not be an expert on the complex mechanism of the working parts of his vehicle. Similarly, a good Public Relations Officer may not necessarily understand the ultimate workings and mechanics of all the mass media. But like the good driver he should know how to handle his vehicle as a whole to get the maximum benefit from it.

The Public Relations Officer is mainly a communicator. He has to communicate the ideas and policies of the organisation to the public through various media such as the press, TV, radio, film, oral communication exhibition etc. The Public Relations Officer, therefore, must have a thorough knowledge of and experience in mass media operation so that he can handle them effectively. He should present to the different media of communication the whole story in a manner that covers both the positive and negative aspects of an issue. The skill of persuasive writing is the most important pre requisite for a successful PR. The Public Relations Officer must be sufficiently experienced in writing for the newspapers, magazines and other print media, but he may not be so well versed in designing exhibition, producing films or presenting a radio programme. It should be possible for the Public Relations Officer to organize and manage different programmes.

As mentioned earlier, the PRO acts not only as the source of information at his organization, but also as the interpreter of its official policy to the public. To carry out these responsibilities effectively, he should always be associated with the decision-making of the organization and its top management. The PRO must ensure that the top management always considers the public's interests. The PRO, therefore, can be called the publics' 'eyes' and 'ears'.

It is, therefore, desirable that the PRO should be under the immediate and direct control of the Chief Executive and not under any intermediary officer of the organization. This gives the PRO ample scope to be in intimate liaison with the top management and to deal with matters at the highest level, besides enabling him to be in close touch with the heads of other departments.

The PRO must strive to gain the confidence of the management. At the same time, the management must take the PRO into confidence. Such an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence is necessary to carry out the functions successfully and to safeguard the interests of the management effectively.

One of the prime functions of the PRO is the building of the right image for his organization, based on its good performance. The image of an organization depends on the functioning of its various departments and on the kind of relations they keep with the public at large. In order to succeed as an image-builder, the PRO should first enhance his own image and the image of his profession, within and outside the organization.

The PRO has to establish and maintain close liaison with the various mass media on the one hand and the organization which he represents, on the other. In fact, he is the immediate link between the organization and the media. It is the PRO who receives queries and reactions from the media and it is he who communicates to them the first information of public interest. In dealing with the media and their personnel, the PRO often has to face irritating and controversial questions. Such situations have to be tackled carefully and with tact, and the PRO should not lose his cool over such controversial or delicate issues. The capacity to maintain a pleasant and equable disposition and never to lose temper is the greatest asset for a PRO. What is equally important, he should diligently avoid the last vestiges of red-tapism and evasiveness.

Responsibilities of a Public Relation Officer:

1. Relation with the publics.
2. Relation with the press.
3. Handle publications.
4. Relation with the local community.
5. Handle the financial relation.
6. Relation with the Govt.
7. Take the responsibility of the annual report of the concern.
8. Arranging the press conferences.
9. Handling the crisis situations.
10. Reception of the guests.
11. Taking every possible step for building and boosting the image of the organization.

12. Coordinating the organization and the public and bridging the communication gap, if any.

QUALIFICATIONS OF P.R.O.

While appointing PROs most of the organizations prefer graduates with a Diploma in Journalism or Public Relations. Firms belonging to the financial sector and chemical industry want graduates in commerce and science respectively.

Some organizations insist on certain special requirements for the PR practitioner, such as the following: He should be / should have —-

A) Intellectually sharp.

B) A man of many tastes.

C) A generalist in terms of capabilities and a specialist in so far as P.R. responsibilities are concerned.

D) Essentially be a 'go-getter'

E) Flair for writing.

F) Pleasing personality, initiative and drive.

G) Proficient in oral and written communication.

H) Equally at ease whether writing or talking.

I) Ability to communicate effectively.

The Committee on Public Relations and Publicity in public undertakings recommend the following as the minimum qualifications for P.R.Os in public sector enterprises :

(a) A good university degree, preferably in Humanities,

(b) Personality to communicate effectively with a variety of people inside and outside the organizations at various levels,

(c) Capacity for sustained hard work and ability to handle different human and organizational problems,

(d) Writing and editing of news items, features and articles; experience of working in an advertising agency; ability to write scripts and commentaries for films and broadcasts; understanding of and ability

to utilize various media of mass communication, press, printed material (house magazines, pamphlets, leaflets and other company publications), radio, films, audio-visual programmes, etc.

(e) Institutional training in public relations would be a very desirable qualification,

(f) Persons who head a P.R. set-up should have the quality of leadership and skill to handle creative writers, visualisers and artists to get the best out of them.

THE COMMANDMENTS FOR A GOOD PRO

1. To acquire flair for writing and public speaking, with an ability to communicate ideas effectively.
2. To inculcate a wide reading habit and curiosity for forceful words. It is only through wide reading that one can acquire knowledge on a variety of subjects and gain ability to handle problems with confidence.
3. To gain adequate knowledge of all mass media.
4. To develop good organizing ability and make friends at all levels.
5. To be cheerful and courteous.
6. To have an infinite capacity for taking pains and doing hard work.
7. To develop ability to persuade people by cogent reasoning.
8. To instill in oneself a sense of curiosity about people, things and places, together with an ability to conceptualize a situation and to understand public moods.
9. To have a good imagination, a lively inquisitive mind and sense of humour.
10. To be honest and sincere.
11. To offer counseling based on an understanding of human behaviour and to analyze future trends and predict their consequences.
12. To research into public opinion, attitudes and expectations and advise on necessary action

13. To establish and maintain two-way communication based on truth and full information
14. To prevent conflict, misunderstanding and promote mutual respect and social responsibility
15. To harmonize the private and the public interest by promoting good-will with staff, suppliers & customers
16. To improve industrial relations
17. To promote products or services.
18. To maximize profitability by projecting a corporate identity.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: Who is a PR officer?

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Q. 2: What are the basic qualities required by a good PR person?

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ACTIVITY - 5.1

1. Go to a nearby branch of State Bank of India and meet the *Grahak Meetra* and ask him/ her about their PR strategies.

5.4 PR set up in an organization

Public relations or PR has a very important role in an organization. The PR function is not exclusive concern of only few PR experts, but the responsibility and concern of every one in the organization, from the top brass to the lower cadre. One of the most important factors that determines

and influences an organizations status and reputation is what its own employees think and say about it. The role of public relations in an organization is to develop commitment, motivation and morale among the people to enable them to function well in different circumstances. The purpose is also to develop an appropriate work culture and the necessary attitudes and competence with the ultimate goals of establishing and maintaining a bridge of mutual understanding and good will between the organization and its various publics.

The status of a Public Relations Department in an organization is very crucial. As far as the internal communication in an organization is concerned, the PR department plays a role of an intermediary between the employee and the employer or, we can say, between the top brass and the other employees including the lower cadre. The PR department disseminates the various policies and programmes initiated by the management to the other employees and the department collects and conveys the reaction or the feedbacks of the employees and conveys them to the management regarding a specific issue.

The primary function of the Public Relations department in an organization is to establish and maintain good relation with its internal as well as external publics. To maintain this relation with its publics a PR department must take some initiative of publishing printed materials, producing audio visual materials and filling the communication gap, if any, among the various groups of the organization and finally disseminating information to the publics. In order to initiate a steady flow of information covering all major aspects of the organization's operations, it is necessary to create official channel of communication between the public relations department and the senior person in charge of the various activities. Again, to provide information from the divisions, a pattern of procedures should be formulated. No two organizations are similar and, therefore, public relations procedures must also vary in detail.

Besides, the PR department also plays the role of bridging the

communication gap between the external publics or the target audiences and the organization. The department also tries to build a good image of the organization before the publics.

PUBLIC RELATION DEPARTMENT OF A LARGE ORGANIZATION :-



As we have seen in the above picture, in a large organization, Public Relations Officer or the PR Manager is directly under the Chief Executive Officer or the Managing Director of the organization. He is assisted and supported by a few assistant Public Relations officers, who are assigned different PR tasks, such as media relations, research and planning, information, advertising etc.

The basic public relations functions of a social welfare organization are similar to those of any other organization. Typically the administrative functions are handled by a Professional Public Relations practitioner and staff who prepare materials and provide services for different chapters and committees, supervise staff services and personnel, establish and control Public Relations budget, coordinate organization activities involving the public, plan Public Relations programmes, establish policy and evaluate the effectiveness of their public relations. The list of functions performed by Public Relations departments varies from company to company, organization to organization.

The Public Relations Officer has to be appointed within the Chief Executive's Department. The PRO is directly responsible to the CEO for

advising and implementing the public relations programme in all its varied aspects. The PR department is responsible for the following-

1. Controlling the public relations activities through the presentation and implementation of agreed policies and stratagies;
2. Conveying and interpreting to management information on public attitudes and views about the company and/or the industry it serves;
3. Preparing all policy and financial statements and on company affairs to the Press, TV and radio. Handling day-to-day inquiries form the Press, and the initiation of Press interest in the affairs, services and production of the company, regularly issuing news material on all company activities;
4. Advising on the preparation of prestige publications, institutional advertising, films, exhibitions, shareholder relations, house style, community relations, and other relevant activities;
5. Instructing the company's financial advertising agents on all matters relating to financial and annual report, advertising and publicity;
6. Liaison with the company's department on all matters relating to the dissemination of internal information and the company's employee publications.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.3: What is the essential necessity of a Public Relations department in an organization?

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Q.4: Why is the PR department is important for internal PR?

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ACTIVITY - 5.2

Observe the functions of a Public Relations Department carried out by a govt., public sector organization or a private organization situated in your district.

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5.5 PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY OF INDIA (PRSI)

The Public Relations Society of India (PRSI) was established in 1958 to promote the recognition of Public Relations as a profession and to formulate and interpret the objectives and the potentialities of public relations as a strategic management function to the public.

The society functioned as an informal body till 1966 when it was registered under the Indian Societies Act XXVI of 1961, with headquarters in Mumbai. Leter on, registration clasped because of certain technical reasons and a few years back it was registered afreash with its head quarter at New Delhi. Currently, Dr. Ajit Pathak is the national president and Mr. S. Tewari is the secretary general.

Presently, the society has as many as 33 chapters in various parts of the country.

To enlist as member of PRSI, one has to apply to the Chairperson of the chapter of the region. Each application for membership is forwarded by the Regional Chapter to the National Council for consideration with their recommendations regarding acceptance and classification, and forward the same to the Secretary-General for consideration of the National Council.

There are following classes of members :

1. General Members;
2. Life Members;
3. Associate Members;

4. Honorary Members; and
5. Student Members

The society is recognized as the national PR organization by the International Public Relations Association, and is one of the founder members of the Global Alliance of Public Relations and Communications Management. The Regional Chapters of the society regularly organize seminars, lectures on various aspects of public relations. PRSI today has 3000 members in the country.

April 21, is a red-letter day in the history of Indian public relations. It is because the National public Relations Day has been celebrated on this day all over the country since 1986. The First All India Public Relations Conference was organised in Delhi on April 21, 1968.



LET US KNOW

PRCI: In addition to PRSI, another important organization of PR professionals christened as Public Relations Council of India (PRCI) has come into existence with its head quarter at Bangalore. Mr. M. B. Jairam is the national president of this newly formed body. A majority of its members are drawn from the south.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.5: When was the Public Relations Society of India (PRSI) established?

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Q.6: Why is 21st April is a red letter day for PRSI?

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5.6 LET US SUM UP

The Public Relations Officer, popularly known as PRO, is primarily a communicator. A PRO should have strong communication skills, both written and spoken, be able to plan, organize and manage different tasks, have the ability to organize and manage others, be able to work well under pressure and to tight deadlines, have an interest in maintaining good working contacts with the media.

The primary function of the Public Relations department in an organization is to establish and maintain a good relation with its internal as well as external publics. As the oldest PR organization, the Public Relations Society of India (PRSI) was established in 1958 to promote the recognition of public relations as a profession and to formulate and interpret the objectives and the potentialities of public relations as a strategic management function to the public.



5.7 FURTHER READING

1. *Applied Public Relations and Communication* by K R Balan, Sultan hard & Sons, New Delhi
2. *Handbook of PR in India by* D S Mehta, Allied Pub., New Delhi



5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No.1: Public relations officer (PRO) is a PR practitioner or professional, who looks after an organisation's reputation, by helping build and maintain good relationships with the media and with the organisation's 'publics', which include customers, suppliers, shareholders and staff.

Ans. to Q. No. 2: The following are the main qualities required to be possessed by a good PRO :

a. He shoud be:

1. a good communicator.
2. Smart.
3. punctual
4. Good interpreter.
5. Cool and calm
6. Hard working

b. He must have-

1. Command on various language
2. Presence of mind.
3. Good knowledge on the background of the organization
4. Knowledge on the national & state policies.
5. Media awareness.
6. Good personality.
7. Tactfulness.
8. Farsightedness
9. Organizing capacity.

Ans. to Q. No. 3: The primary function of the Public Relations department in an organization is to establish and maintain a good relation with its internal as well as external publics. To maintain this relation with its publics a PR department must take some initiatives of publishing printed materials, producing audio visual materials and filling the communication gap if any among the various groups of the organization and finally disseminating information to the publics.

Ans. to Q. No. 4: As per as the internal communication in an organization is concerned, the PR department plays a role of an intermediary between the employee and the employer or, we can say, between the top brass and the other employees including the lower cadre. The PR department disseminates the various policies and

programmes initiated by the management to the other employees and the department collects and conveys the reaction or the feedbacks of the employees and conveys them to the management regarding a specific issue.

Ans. to Q. No. 5: The Public Relations Society of India (PRSI) was established in 1958.

Ans. to Q. No. 6: The First All India Public Relations Conference was organized in Delhi on April 21, 1968. April 21, is a red-letter day in the history of Indian public relations. It is because the National Public Relations Day is celebrated on this day all over the country since 1986.



5.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q. 1: Elucidate the role, duties and responsibilities of a PRO.

Q. 2: What qualities are required to be a good PRO?

Q. 3: Write an essay on the importance of a PR department in an organization.

Q. 4: Discuss the role of PRSI to establish PR as a profession in India.