UNIT 6 : METHODS AND TOOLS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

UNIT STRUCTURE

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- 6.4.3 Rejoinders
- 6.4.4 Press Briefings

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6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- outline various tools of PR
- describe different publications
- discuss house journals and its various types
- name the steps to prepare a press release
- enumerate the Bulletin Boards
- analyze the concept of back grounder, rejoinders etc.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

By now you must have been already be familiar with some basic concepts of public relations, its growth and development, propaganda and publicity, PR set up in an organization etc. We have also discussed the qualities and responsibilities of a PRO.

Public Relation as understood commonly, effort to promote a favorable image of an organization, an association, a brand, an individual, an idea, or some other entity. It is quite distinct from marketing. Because PR is less concerned with improving sales of a particular product than promoting its overall image and creating a good will for the organization To achieve these goals we have to take the help of different tools of PR. In this unit we shall discuss the various tools and methods of PR.

In the next course of DJMC, we shall consider some other aspects of mass communication and journalism.

6.2 TOOLS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

An organization may be a large one; it may also be multi-vocational and multi-directional in nature. Hence, it is very important for it to create the right medium of communication to reach out to the varied categories of its publics. Among all the forms of communication, interpersonal communication is probably one of the best. It is also referred to as face-to-face communication or eyeball-to-eyeball communication. But sometime it is not possible to achieve this communication for different reasons. It is the responsibility of the Public Relations Department to understand the communication requirements of these publics, select the right channel and prepare the relevant communication packages to evaluate the efficacy and impact from time to time. Therefore, the selection of appropriate tools of PR is an important task for a PR department. Let us have a look on the various tools of PR.

The following are some important tools of Public Relations.

1. Publicity Media :
    a) Print media
    b) Radio and other audio media
    c) Television
    d) Film
    e) Video
    f) New media



2. Oral Communication
    a) Meetings
    b) Speech
    c) Group Discussion



3. Publications
    a) House Journal
    b) Diary
    c) Calendar
    d) News Letter
    e) Annual Report
    f) Photograph
    g) Pictorial Album
    h) Book
    i) Booklet
    j) Pamphlet
    k) Brochure
    l) Leaflet
    m) Folder





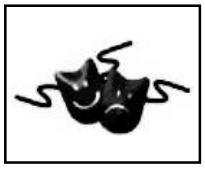
4. Advertising
    a) Direct mail
    b) Outdoor advertising
    c) Indoor advertising, (including print, radio, television, new media etc.)

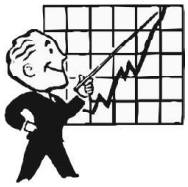


5. Media Relations
    a) Press Conference
    b) Press Briefing
    c) Press Tour



6. Events
    a) Exhibition
    b) Open house
    c) Cultural event
    D) Special event





CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: What do you mean by the tools of PR?

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Q.2: Give the right answers for the following-

a) Advertising is a tool of PR. Yes/ No

b) Internet is a medium under new media. Yes/ No

c) Public relation is not a link between the management and its various public. Yes/ No



ACTIVITY - 6.1

Visit the nearest educational institution and prepare a PR Plan and make a list of PR tools in order of your preference.

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6.4 PRESS CONFERENCES

Organizing a press conference has become an accepted means of issuing information to the press. A press conference is a voluntary presentation of information to the media. In a press conference, a PR practitioner decides on the information and how it should be presented and who will present it. It is an opportunity to get the story on TV, radio or in the news papers. To hold a press conference a PR practitioner

contacts the media, chooses the time and place, makes a presentation and responds to reporters' questions.

To ensure success of the press conference and acceptability of material provided to media persons from time to time, the PRO should always strive to develop friendly relations with the media. In addition, a PRO has also to be very careful about establishing his/ her credibility.

A press conference should not be called merely to present a handout on the development of the organization or for giving information. This could be, covered equally well by a press release. The main justification for organizing a press conference is that the subject on the issue is an important one, which requires some clarifications or important information and the management of an organization can share ideas and answer or explain a number of questions from the journalists present.

A press conference is never held as a routine affair. It should be held to announce major policy decisions and some important message of a organization.

The invitees to the government press conference are normally all accredited correspondents including foreign correspondents, accredited cameramen and representatives from Radio and TV, etc. In case of a private organization all correspondents who normally cover the organization are invited to the press conference. Official invitees to the press conference are generally minimum in number. The information officer or public relations officer first briefs the speaker in advance about the correspondents and the nature of questions likely to be asked as well as the subject matter so that the executive can start the discuss subject wise. Before the press conference begins they should also give a proper but brief introduction of the speaker and the subject. Invitations to the press conference are sent well in advance indicating the date, day, time, subject and venue of the conference. The name of the person holding the press conference and his designation are usually mentioned there.

It is better to organize a press conference in the forenoon or early afternoon in order to catch the next day editions of newspapers. In case of an important press conference it is necessary to tape-record the proceedings. Discussion on individual and personal cases should be avoided. Generally not more than four to six questions are to be allowed on any one aspect of the subject.

It is necessary to prepare a comprehensive note on the subject of the press conference and to distribute it a little before the press conference is scheduled to start. This will help in many ways, particularly in the time of rechecking facts and statistics.

Tea, snacks or light refreshment can be served just after the formal conference is over. The press conference arrangements should be properly organized. Transport can be provided both ways, if the press conference is held at a distance or out of the prime place of the city or town. Equal treatment should be given to all newspapers and audio visual media representatives.

Actually, a press conference provides an opportunity to the organization to communicate directly with the representatives of the press. On rare occasions, Public Relations directors arrange press conferences. Its purpose is to obtain publicity in connection with some vitally important news, such as the introduction of a new product, settlement of a labor dispute, change in management, plant expansion, corporate reorganization, and accidents or disaster. A press conference should not be called unless the importance of the news clearly indicates doing so, and then it should be so timed that the news will secure the widest coverage. The president and representatives of the management should be present to make the announcement and answer the reporters' questions.

6.4.1 Press Release

A press release is a fundamental tool of public relations. It is a written statement of an organization distributed to the media. Press

releases are usually sent via newswire service (such as PR Newswire or Business Wire) to media outlets, where journalists may pick them up and use them as they see fit.

The text of a release is usually written as a news story with an eye-catching headline and a text written in standard journalistic style with inverted pyramid structure. This style of news writing makes it easier for reporters to quickly grasp the message.

Some journalists believe that to copy from a press release may be unethical ; they believe it to be a lapse of good judgment. Ethical reporters prefer to try soliciting an individual quote from the speaker before filing their story. Public relations professionals believe that press releases and other collateral materials aid a journalist's job.

Since press releases reflect the organization's preferred interpretation or positive packaging of a story, journalists are often skeptical about their contents. The level of skepticism depends on what the story is and who is telling it. Newsrooms receive so many press releases that, unless it is a story that the media are already paying attention to, a press release alone often isn't enough to catch a journalist's attention.

With the advent of modern media and new technology, press releases are to be found in the form of video news releases and audio news releases.

The usual way of issuing information to the press is by writing a press release. A press release is an official, authorized statement about the policies and activities of an organization. As the company or the government has to stand by it, the press release must be factual, and correct and must project the policy clearly and without ambiguity. It should leave no scope for misreporting. This is then sent by post or by hand to various newspapers and periodicals as well as to radio and television news offices. It should also be communicated to the news agencies, who have direct tele-printer contact with the main newspaper offices in the country, The news agencies edit the release and do not send it out in its entirety. So

it is always worthwhile sending out the full release as widely as possible. The PRO should give adequate information on all points of public interest. If he examines the material critically from the viewpoint of a press reporter and the public, he will immediately discover certain areas where further light or clarification is necessary.

The press release should be written in journalistic style. It should follow the principles of news reporting. The introduction or the 'lead' should be in a summary format. It should answer the five W's and one H as in a news story. The second and the subsequent paragraphs should elucidate and elaborate the points. It should provide facts or information of interest to the readers and should attempt to cover all the aspects of a specific subject.

The release should not generally be lengthy. It should be concise and to the point. The release is a piece of clear writing without any ambiguity, without any effort towards colour or ornamentation. As far as possible each story should be complete in itself. Public memory is short and people are not likely to remember what had been said on the subject a couple of months ago, or even the previous fortnight. Moreover, repetitive publicity is the essence of selling an idea.

It should have a consistent format. Generally, the name of the agency from where the release emanates is given on the top. The date and place are indicated on the top right side. The release should have a title or subtitle also, if necessary. In the case of releases from non-official organizations, it is desirable also to mention the designation of the person issuing the release and his telephone number.

We are often confused considering some important releases from government or other organizations release with the general press releases. The highest authority of an organization, especially the government, usually sends the following categories of news releases :—

I. Press Communiqués

2. Press notes

3. Handouts

4. Unofficial stories or unofficial handouts.

I. Press Communiqués

Press communiqués are issued when some important government decisions or announcements are made, such as cabinet appointments, conclusion of the foreign dignitaries' visits, etc. The press communiqué has a formal character. It carries the name of the ministry or department, place and date at the bottom left hand corner of the release. Generally, the press is expected to reproduce the press communiqué without any substantial change. No heading or sub-heading is given on press communiqués.

2. Press notes

Press notes are less formal in character. They are issued on important matters. They also carry the name of the ministry/ department and the place at the bottom left hand corners. Headings or sub-headings are given in press notes.

3. Handouts

Handouts are issued on a variety of subjects and on day-to-day activities of the ministry/department, VIP speeches, questions and answers in Parliaments etc. The handout is a less formal type of release and not issued under the government's formal authority. It bears the name of the **PIB** (Press Information Bureau) or other releasing agency on the top without any mention of the ministry/ department to which the release pertains to The place and date are indicated on top at the right hand side. One of the most important common categories of handouts relate to the speeches of ministers or other high officials. The handout is released only when the speech is connected with governmental activities. No official handout is issued if the minister has spoken in his personal capacity as a member of a political organization. The speech, when released to the press in the form of handout is summarized and properly edited. Formal, introductory and concluding remarks are omitted

as redundant and repetitive materials are taken out. A proper title and a sub-title are given. The full text of the speech is not released unless the subject is of substantial importance.

4. Unofficial stories or unofficial handouts.

Unofficial handouts are issued on the subject where the government would not like to assume official responsibility in the matter but feels that there may be positive advantages in making the information public unofficially. These handouts are supplements to oral briefings. The unofficial handouts do not have the imprint of the PIB or of other releasing agencies. The date and place are indicated at bottom left hand comer.

The timing of releases is very important. All releases should ,as far as possible, reach the desk by 6 to 7 p. m. The PRO should finalize the release at least one hour in advance of the official delivery time.

Writing a Press Release:

Press releases are broadly catagoriesed into the following types –

a) general news releases
b) event releases
c) product press releases
d) social media press releases

The writing style of the press releases is common. This helps journalists to separate press releases from other PR communication methods, such as pitch letters or media advisories. Some of these common structural elements include:

Headline —It is used to grab the attention of journalists and briefly summarize the news.

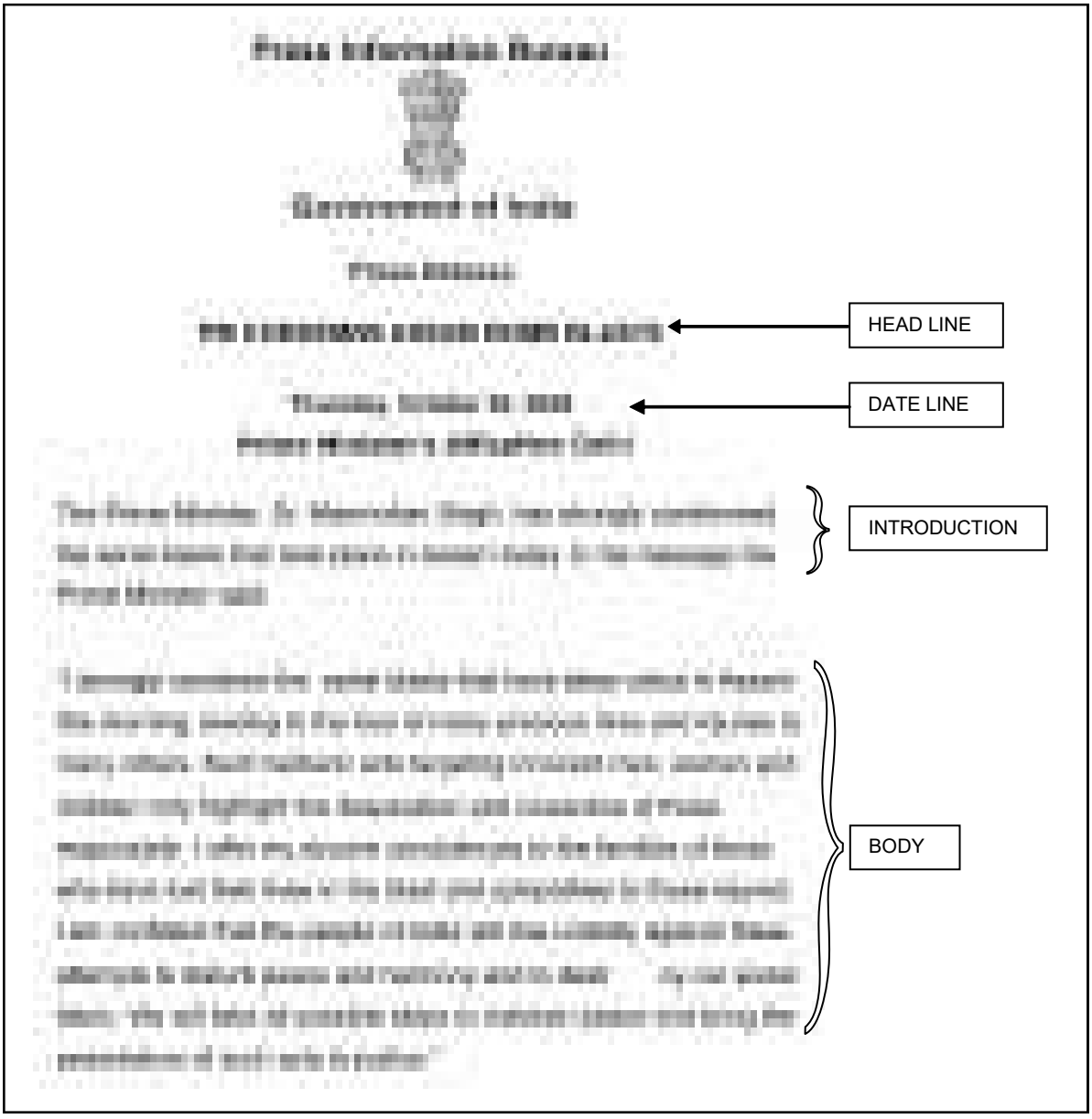
Dateline — It contains the release date and usually the originating city of the press release.

Introduction —It is the first paragraph in a press release, and generally gives the basic answers to the questions of who, what,

when, where and why.

Body —Contains the further explanation, statistics, background, or other details relevant to the news.

Media Contact Information — name, phone number, email address, mailing address, or other contact information for the PR or other media relations contact person. The following is an example of a press release issued by the Prime Minister's Office regarding the serial bomb blasts took place in Assam on October 30, 2008.



6.4.1 Backgrounder

The backgrounder is defined in the dictionaries as a summary of pertinent information and facts about the subject or about the organization at hand, which is provided to the media, especially, when dealing with a complex issue. The term is also described as a press conference or interview in which a government official explains to the reporters the background of an action or policy.

Basically, a backgrounder provides the background information about the organization and its achievements, success stories, various activities etc. with a brief history. It is necessary to distribute it at a press conference along with the press release to inform the journalists about the activities of the organization. It also helps a journalist to prepare a comprehensive report on the organization.

6.4.2 Rejoinders

PR persons may sometimes be forced to be the front men in some public disputes. The very simple reason is that by issuing rejoinders, reports or denials, the public relations person unwittingly gives public relations mileage.

Actually, sometimes some newspapers may publish some news which may be against an organization. This news may harm the image building process of the organization or it may reduce the public's confidence in the reputation of the organization. In that case the PR department of the organization should think about it and should issue clarification to the concerned newspaper/s. This is popularly known as a rejoinder. The rejoinder is an opportunity for the PR department to address constructively and positively the comments and criticisms made by an individual or an assessor. A rejoinder can effectively counter the criticism/s raised in the reports, which can show the way to the concerned individual or the assessor and it can also help from a favourable image of the organisation again before the readers of the newspapers.

6.4.4 Press Briefings

The intention of a Press briefing is to enhance and reinforce the conventional written publicity material. It is an opportunity *to* highlight certain events and also to clarify the complicated issues to the press representatives through questions and answers. Sometimes better results are achieved in a face-to-face discussion with the correspondents rather than giving information to them through written publicity material. To get the best results out of oral briefings, it is necessary that these should be organized in a methodical manner. Every care has to be taken as to when and how to give the press briefing.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.3: Define the term rejoinder.

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Q.4: What do you mean by a press release?

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Q.5: What is backgrounder?

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Q.6: What is a briefing?

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Q.7: What is a press conference? Why press conferences are important?

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ACTIVITY - 6.2

Write a Press release with a backgrounder for the organization with which you are associated.

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6.5 HOUSE JOURNALS

The journal brought out by various organizations serves as a vehicle of Public Relations. In the two way communication process of the employer and the employee,the house journal assumes a great importance. Most of the organizations, especially the industrial concerns both in the public and private sectors, bring out their own house journals to motivate employees for better output by explaining the policies and programmes of the management of the organization. This type of publication helps to a great extent in creating a team spirit, inculcating mutual understanding between the management and the employees. It also provides opportunities for the employees to show their talent in creative writing and expression. The house journal can help to fill the communication gap and also enables the management to establish rapport with the general public as well as others to whom an organization wants to reach.

A house journal is a publication usually brought out at regular intervals. There are basically three types of House journals:

i) Internal House Journal

ii) External House Journal

iii) The Trade Journal

6.5.1 Internal House Journal

Internal house journal is primarily intended for the internal public such as the employees, shareholders, etc. The journal seeks to

enlist the cooperation of its employees by educating them in various matters like honest workmanship, hard work, reduction of waste, regard for safety and so on. At the same time, the staff members will have an opportunity to use the journal as a forum of expression of their opinion, creative writing etc. before the management of the organization. It helps to get the feedback of the internal public regarding an issue or policy.

6.5.2 External House Journal

This type of journal is intended for the external public such as salesmen, sales agents, financial community, journalists and media houses, legislators, dealers, customers etc. It is essentially a marketing publication, which tells about a product and what it does for the customers. The emphasis is on sales and business. It also helps to provide the future plan of the organization and the external publics can receive the information. External publics can also get a clear image of the organization.

6.5.3 Trade Journal

The trade journals disseminate information regarding the trade, equipment, technical progress etc. of an organization. Unlike house journals, they are not meant for image building of the organization only. There is a combination of the trade and house journals. They give technical information about the trade and also information about the employees and the organization.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.8: What do you mean by a house journal?

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Q.9: Name the various types of house journals.

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ACTIVITY - 6.3

You may be a member of any club or any society or any other association. You might be a member of *Bihu* organizing committee in your locality. On behalf of you organization, try to publish a journal or you may prepare a hand written journal.

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6.6 LET US SUM UP

Public Relations is a link between the management and its various public. Of all the forms of communication, interpersonal communication probably is the best. It is also referred to as face-to-face communication or eyeball-to-eyeball communication. It is the responsibility of the Public Relations Department to understand the Communication requirements of these public, select channels and prepare relevant communication packages and evaluate their efficacy and impact from time to time. The following are some important tools of Public Relations- Publicity Media :Print media, Radio and other audio media, Television, Films , Video, New media; Oral Communication: Meetings, Speeches, Group, Discussions; Publications: House Journal, Diaries, Calendars, News Letters, Annual Reports, Photographs, Pictorial Albums, Books, Booklets, Pamphlets,

Broachers, Leaflets; Direct mail, Outdoor advertising, Indoor advertising; Press Conference, Press Briefing, Press Tours, Exhibition, Open house, Cultural events, Special events etc.

A press conference is a media event in which an organization, which is interested to publicize an issue or to make news, invites journalists to disseminate the information and ask questions to clarify doubts etc. on the issue. In press tours or facility visits much of the exercise is similar to organizing a press conference. Open house is an important tool to build rapport with the community/neighborhood where the plant is located.

A press release is a written statement distributed to the media. It is an important tool of public relations. Press communiqués, Press notes, Handouts, Backgrounder, and Rejoinders are some other important tools of Public Relations.



6.7 FURTHER READING

1. *Applied Public Relations and Communication* by KR Balan, Publisher: Sultan Chand & Sons, Delhi.
2. *Public Relations – An Introduction* By Shirley Harrison, Thomson, UK



6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No.1: PR tools are basically some channels by which we can disseminate information and maintain a good Public Relations with the publics.

Ans. to Q. No. 2: Give the write answers of the following-

a. Advertising is a tool of PR. **Yes**

b. Internet is a medium under new media. **Yes**

c. Public relation is not a link between the management and its various public. **No**

Ans. to Q. No. 3: The rejoinder is the opportunity for the PR department to address constructively and positively the comments and criticisms made by an individual or an assessor. A rejoinder can effectively counter the criticism/s raised in the reports, which can show the way to the concerned individual or the assessor and it can also help a favourable image of the organisation again before the readers of the newspapers.

Ans. to Q. No. 4: A press release is a written statement of an organization distributed to the media. The text of a release is usually written as a news story with an eye-catching headline and a text written in standard journalistic style with inverted pyramid structure.

Ans. to Q. No. 5: The backgrounder is defined in the dictionaries as a summary of pertinent information and facts about the subject or about the organization at hand, which is provided to the media especially when dealing with a complex issue.

Ans. to Q. No. 6: Press briefing is an opportunity *to* highlight certain events and also to clarify the complicated issues to the press representatives through questions and answers.

Ans. to Q. No. 7: A press conference is a media event in which an organization, interested to publicize an issue or to make news, invites journalists of different media to disseminate the information and ask questions on the issue. There are two main reasons for organizing a press conference. One is that a newsmaker who gets many questions from reporters can answer them all at once rather than answering so many phone calls. Another is that someone can try to attract news coverage for something that was not of interest to journalists before. Also, it is a cost effective tool

for disseminating information.

Ans. to Q. No. 8: A House journal is a publication, issued periodically by an organization or agency to provide information to a particular audience. A house journal may be issued externally or it may take the form of an in-house journal, used to aid the internal communication process.

Ans. to Q. No. 9: There are basically three types of House journals. These are –

i) Internal House Journal

ii) External House Journal

iii) The Trade Journal



6.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q.1: What do you mean by the tools of Public Relations? Discuss the various tools with some examples.

Q.2: How would you publish a house journal for your organization?

Q.3: What are the rules and regulations necessary to organize a press conference?

Q.4: Enumerate the various publications of a PR department.

Q.5: Why is backgrounder is important in PR?

Q.6: Write a press release on an event of your choice. What is the writing style of a press release?

Q.7: Write a brief note on the importance of Press Conference.

Q.8: Write short notes on –

a) Rejoinder

b) Backgrounder

c) Bulletin board

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