Unit 11: FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

UNIT STRUCTURE

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11.1LEARNING OBJECTIVES

On completion of the unit, you will be able to:

- list the activities associated with public relations
- describe the basic functions of organizational public relations
- discuss propaganda and publicity
- identify the differences between public relations, propaganda and publicity.

11.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, the primary focus will be on the functions of public relations. You will also learn about the concepts of propaganda and publicity, their nature, similarities and differences in relation to public relations.

11.3 BASIC FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

In a world of increasing cut-throat competition, it becomes crucial for organisations, companies and institutions stay ahead in the race for success.

One good way of doing this is to perform better than the competitors. Performing well is not enough so organisations and companies try to maintain good and mutually beneficial relationships with all their publics through the practice of public relations. Public relations is an approach to effective communication to achieve desired results.There are two primary functions that Public Relations serves :

i) Management function
ii) Communication function

Management function:Organisations usually have several management areas to help them operate at their best capacity. Some of the areas are research and development, finance, legal, human resources and marketing. Each of these areas focuses on its contribution to the success of the organisation. Public relations unique function is to help the organisation develop and maintain relationships with all of its key publics and stakeholders by effectively communicating with these groups. Communication is key in maintaining a satisfactory, long-term, trusting relationships with publics and stakeholders. Public relations provides the greatest value to an organisation when it is used strategically. Public Relations is a communication strategy and is therefore used as a management function. Public Relations to provide both management and publics the information they need for making decisions of mutual interest.This role requires executing strategies with the communication tactics of news releases, employee newsletters, media placements, web site content, speeches, blogs, and social media messaging. Many a time, public relations professionals collaborate with other managers within an organisation to define and solve problems.They help other managers think through organizational problems using a public relations perspective.

Communication function: Public Relations is a blend of management and communication function. For any organisation to sustain, successful communication needs to be established from the top level management to all its publics that includes employees, stakeholders, unions and the

consumer of its products or services. Public Relations professionals are communication specialists Communication plays a significant role in effective public relations. Two way communication is essential and information must flow in its desired form between the organization and publics. The receiver must understand what the sender intends to communicate for an effective public relation. The message needs to create an impact in the minds of customers for an effective brand positioning. Communication needs to have a strong influence on the target audience for them to remain loyal towards the organisation.In public relations, the receivers play a crucial role. The PR professional must ensure that the receivers interpret the information correctly and also give necessary feedbacks and reviews. It is really important to understand its target audience. Public relation activities would go unnoticed if receivers do not understand the message well.

Public Relations Roles

The difficulty in sorting of the various public relations roles had led the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) to define certain activities that are primarily associated with public relations. These activities are:

1. Publicity
2. Communication
3. Public Affairs
4. Issues Management
5. Government Relations
6. Financial Public Relations
7. Community Relations
8. Industry Relations
9. Minority Relations
10. Advertising
11. Press Agentry
12. Promotion
13. Media Relations

From the above activities and the definitions that you have gone through in the first unit, we can describe the basic functions of public relations practice

in the following ways:

1. Public relations deals with facts, its level of accuracy and reality. Public relations personnels develop strategic planned programmes that gives utmost priority to public and form the base of any good and sound public relations policy.
2. Public relations is a public not a personal service oriented profession. The prime focus is on public interest and not personal rewards.
3. Having mentioned that public relations revolves around public interest, any PR practitioner should be able to engage with the public in order to seek their support for programmes and policies. They should also be able to refuse any client or a misleading programme.
4. As PR practitioners reach publics through mass media, utmost transparency should be shared with media houses and media persons. The PR practitioners should not lie outright or by implication.
5. PR practitioners are mediators between any organisation and its publics. Therefore, the must ensure that they are effective communicators conveying information repeatedly until understanding is reached and awareness is created.
6. Public relations is not a conjecture. PR doesn't work on assumptions and guesses. It involves two way communication and above all responsible communication. Public relations require scientific public opinion research extensively. It also should employ social sciences like social psychology and sociology to better understand the public.
7. Public relations practitioners are obligated to explain problems and issues to the targeted publics before these problems elevates to crises. They should inform and advise the public, so that the public won't be taken by surprise.
8. The assessment or evaluation of public relations programmes should only be measured by the effectiveness of the message and changed perceptions of the publics. A practitioner should be measured by only one standard and i.e. ethical performance.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. State the two primary functions of Public Relations

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Q2. List out some of the activities of Public Relations

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11.4 PROPAGANDA

Public relations being a persuasive form of communication is performed on behalf of clients. It is the process of agreeing to create a positive atmosphere of opinion towards any individual, product, institution or idea which is represented. In order to achieve this goal, public relations professionals use several techniques and ways to reach and influence their target publics. These methods of persuasion or rhetoric should be considered beyond one - way flow of information, argument, and influence.

Persuasion is used to change or balanceaggressive opinions, bring out hiddenopinions and positive attitudes, and conserve favourable opinions.The most difficult persuasive task is to turn negative opinions into favourable ones.There is much truth to the adage "Don't confuse me with the facts; my mind is madeup."

Propaganda primarily serve the interests of the one who delivers the message. It is an effective tool of persuasion used for spreading of information in order to influence and manipulate public opinion and beliefs. There are several ways in which information can be transmitted to an audience. What makes propaganda of a message is the quality of information and the way in which it is used. Any communication intended to influence the public's behaviour, beliefs and action, whether right or wrong, true or false is called propaganda.

The Reader's Digest Great Dictionary describes propaganda as "information of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or a point of view".

Nature of Propaganda

- Propaganda is a systematic and planned effort to persuade the public.
- Propaganda does not lay emphasis on the importance of truth or falsehood of the content of the message that is being delivered.
- Any propagandist stresses on one - sided message
- Propagandists exhibit others weakness
- Political speech constitutes one of the most widely used forms of propaganda

Example: Many politicians while running for officetry to project the best possible image of them while pointing out directly or indirectly at all the flawsof their opponents.

Propaganda uses different media such as radio, television, newspapers and magazineto reach a mass audience. Such an audience cannot argue back, to the least it can simply beis showing approval ordisapproval to the point of view of the propagandist. If propaganda was conceived for only one person, that individual can disagree withit and back up personal views, a situation that is also true of small groups. In fact propagandists arenot interested in a reasoned response or a dialogue; what they want is to convert as many people aspossible to their point of view.

As an art of persuasion, propaganda has been used for thousands of years. As a term, propaganda came into use in the early 17th century, derived from a missionary associationset up within the Roman Catholic church in 1622 - Congregatio de Propaganda Fide (Congregationfor the Propagation of the Faith).The Vatican established the College of Propagate in Rome in 1662 AD for the training of missionaries and to spread Christian missionaries through foreign missions. This principle however is applicable to all religions. Eventually, propaganda was used to build a strong centralised government in different nations.

The word 'propaganda' has a negative impact on masses due to its implication of biasedness, deception and misinformation. In 1919, Adolf Hitler co-founded the Nationalist Socialist German Worker's Party (Nazi party). In his autobiography, Mein Kampf, a political manifesto stated the imposition of One Empire, One People, One Leader. He imposed this idea at the expense of millions of lives. Joseph Goebbels, the propaganda minister of Hitler, defined propaganda, "As an instrument of politics, a power of social control". Goebbels believed in the 'You Can' theory that was based on 'Man believes anything if you tell in a proper way' and followed Hitler's principle, " The greater the lie is, the more people would believe it." The emphasis was given to lies and flattery instead of truth and reality.

11.5 PUBLICITY

Publicity is many a time used as a synonym for public relations, but the two activities and its approaches are not similar. Publicity is definitely a tool of public relations. Any public relations professional during the execution of a public relations programme will seek the help of a publicist or use publicity to reach out to a wider audience. Essentially, publicity means placing information in any news medium such as newspapers, television or the internet. Or, it can also be placed in a specialised medium such as corporate and association reports, newsletters or brochures. Publicity has a vital function and that is to disseminate information of an organisation to attract attention or promote its brand, products and services. They do not influence behaviours or help set policies or execute PR programmes. However, it is to be noted that there is also a difference between advertising and publicity as well.

Advertising is a paid form of communication. Any organisation in order to promote its brand image or its products and services needs a platform. Therefore, a space is purchased on any media to promote the same. However, publicity is a non paid communication activity which includes write ups on the product or service, and issue, of an organisation and its activities, in the news columns or editorial columns of a newspaper and magazine, on

any website or blog or the non-commercial air time on television and radio. It is information generatedand put across by the media on their own, or on a special request by the organisation's spokesperson. It is are sult of significant news on the product or service, organisation, or an event concerningthe product or organisation itself. It must be essentially interesting, new, informative and necessary for the readers or viewers of the media in the eyes of the reporter or editor.

Publicity is as essential as advertising in the communication objectives and process of anorganisation. It is a tactical tool, is considered more credible than advertising because the media is seen as the source of news. Hence the message has greater acceptability. It also saves a lot of cost. Handling publicity efficiently can offer tremendous benefits, and if handled badly, it can do severe damage. Besides just reading well it must be factual and truthful. To be able to do this successfully requires good knowledge of mass media,its editorial needs and policies, the audience and the operation process. It requires planning,effective writing, and extremely good media relations to ensure that news releases receive favourable consideration.

Most of the activity in Public Relations comprises publicity. The publicity material includes news releases, pictures, articles and background material. It is important toprepare publicity messages, keeping in mind the channels of mass media to be used - whether newspaper, specialised magazines, radio or television broadcast, online news portals, etc. Unsystematic distribution of publicity material is a sheer wastage of resources and may not attract the attention of the media.

Publicity materials can be distributed mainly in two ways. The press/ media can be invited to a press conference where the organisation's management and PR professional addresses the media and make the necessary announcements or it can also be an event where a product or service is launched supported by valid information. Press conferences give a scope for the media and the organisation to have a face to face dialogue. This establishes more credibility. Press conferences are supported by press kits where the press briefings, releases, notes, photographs or any other important valuable information for the media is provided to the media.

The second way would be to directly get in contact with a media house, mail the necessary information that needs to be communicated to the readers and viewers. The PR professional should be in good terms with the media in order to successfully facilitate such a process.

11.6 DIFFERENCE BETWEEEN PUBLIC RELATIONS, PROPAGANDA AND PUBLICITY

Both Propaganda and Public Relations primary objective is to influence perceptions and generate desired results and responses from the targeted public. Both public relations professionals and propagandists use mass media to convey their respective messages. However, propaganda is an organised effort to propagate an idea or a cause, and may not have an ethical content. It is persuasion, based on self-interest.Elements such as deliberateness and manipulation is used to achieve the propagandist's desired objectives. This distinguishes from the free and open exchange of ideas brought about by public relations. On the other hand, Public Relations underlying message has always been to build goodwill and trust between the organisations and its publics. It uses factual and logical information to persuade its publics. Public Relations is built upon truth and not half truths or lies. It is a long term sustained effort and is of public interest. Propaganda is a one way communication, there is no scope for disagreements or a space for a feedback from its targeted publics. It will necessitate lies and distort facts if needed in order to achieve the purpose. It is short lived.

Publicity shouldn't be confused with public relations. Publicity is a tool of public relations and it is an arm of public relations. By now the learner may have understood that public relations is a planned, deliberate and sustained effort to build a mutual trust and goodwill between an organisation and its publics. In order to achieve this purpose, publicity is used. Publicity concerns an organisation or individual's presence in the media. Forms of publicity include news stories, articles and event information. Publicity creates public awareness and attention around a brand, and publicists gain publicity for their clients by promoting.

Unlike public relations, publicity is used solely to attract attention. It differs from PR in the sense that public relations focuses on more than just public attention. The intent in public relations is to accomplish an organisation's stated goals by sending strategic messages to the appropriate audiences in hopes of impacting their knowledge, behaviours or attitudes. In short, PR manages the overall reputation of the client while simultaneously building relationships among all of those who are affected by it. As a management function, PR focuses on building relationships and managing an image.In public relations, publicity is viewed as a way to gain the client media coverage in a cost-efficient and immediate manner.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q3. Describe the differences between public relations and propaganda

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11.7 LET US SUM UP

Let us summarise some of the important points of this unit in the following ways:

- The two primary functions of public relations i) Management function ii) Communication function
- Public relations as a management function helps the organisation develop and maintain relationships with all of its key publics and stakeholders by effectively communicating with these groups. Communication is key in maintaining a satisfactory, long-term, trusting relationships with an organisation and its publics and stakeholders.
- Public Relations is a blend of management and communication function. For any organisation to sustain, successful communication needs to be

established from the top level management to all its publics that includes employees, stakeholders, unions and the consumer of its products or services. There should be scope of feedback and reviews. Communication needs to have a strong influence on the target audience for them to remain loyal towards the organisation.

- Besides, these two primary functions, there are eight more basic functions of public relations and thirteen listed activities that Public Relations engages with.
- Public relations being a persuasive form of communication is performed on behalf of clients. Persuasion is used to change or balanceaggressive opinions, bring out hidden opinions and positive attitudes, and conserve favourable opinions.
- Propaganda primarily serve the interests of the one who delivers the message. It is an effective tool of persuasion used for spreading of information in order to influence and manipulate public opinion and beliefs. It is a one sided message and uses only one way communication.
- Publicity means placing information in any news medium such as newspapers, television or the internet. Or, it can also be placed in a specialised medium such as corporate and association reports, newsletters or brochures. Publicity has a vital function and that is to disseminate information of an organisation to attract attention or promote its brand, products and services.
- Propaganda is an organised effort to propagate an idea or a cause, and may not have an ethical content. It is persuasion, based on self-interest. Elements such as deliberateness and manipulation is used to achieve the propagandist's desired objectives. This distinguishes from the free and open exchange of ideas brought about by public relations. Public Relations underlying message has always been to build goodwill and trust between the organisations and its publics. It uses factual and logical information to persuade its publics. Public Relations is built upon truth and not half truths or lies. It is a long term sustained effort and is of public interest.
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11.8 FURTHER READING

- Wilcox, Dennis, Cameron, Glen, Reber, Bryan (2015). Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics. Eleventh Edition. Essex: Pearson.
- Newsom, Doug, Turk V, Judy, Kruckeberg, Dean (2000). This is PR: The Realities of Public Relations. Seventh Edition. Singapore: Wadsworth Thomson Learning.
- Reddi, C.V.N (2013). Effective Public Relations and Media Strategy. Second Edition. Prentice Hall India Learning Private Limited.



11.9 ANSWERS TO YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. no 1: The two primary functions of public relations are: a) Management Fucntion b) Communication function.

Ans to Q. no 2: Some of the activities of public relations as listed by the Public Relations Society of America are:

Publicity, Communication, Public Affairs, Issues Management, Government Relation, Financial Public Relations, Community Relations, Industry Relations, Minority Relations, Advertising, Press Agentry, Promotion, Media Relations

Ans to Q. no 3: Both Propaganda and Public Relations primary objective is to influence perceptions and generate desired results and responses from the targeted publicIt is a long term sustained effort and is of public interest. Propaganda is a one way communication. However, propaganda is an

organised effort to propagate an idea or a cause, and may not have an ethical content. It is persuasion, based on self-interest. Elements such as deliberateness and manipulation is used to achieve the propagandist's desired objectives. This distinguishes from the free and open exchange of ideas brought about by public relations. Public Relations underlying message has always been to build goodwill and trust between the organisations and its publics. It uses factual and logical information to persuade its publics.



11.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions

Q1. What are the two primary functions of PR?

B. Short questions(Answer each question in about 150 words):

Q1. Define propaganda. Explain the nature of propaganda.

Q2. What is meant by publicity?Differentiate between publicity and public relations.

C. Long questions(Answer each question in about 300-500 words):

Q1. Explain the five basic functions of public relations

Q2. Propaganda used as a tool of persuasion in public relations. Elaborate on the statement.

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