UNIT 15 : PUBLIC RELATIONS IN ORGANIZATION

UNIT STRUCTURE

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15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to -

- describe the status of the PR department in an Organization
- discuss the functions of a Public Relations Dept. in an organization
- outline the PR campaign and its planning process
- explain the selection of media for a PR campaign
- discuss the implementation and evaluation process of PR
- explain PR in crisis management

15.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit we have analyzed the concept of propaganda and publicity; activities, functions and responsibilities of a Public Relations

Officer, who deals with multifarious activities to build a good image of the organization and to create good public relations with the public.

The role of a Public Relations department is to play a two way communication role with both management and the publics. In communicating with the publics, the PR department seeks to explain the organization to publics through the mass media or interpersonally and to learn how the publics view the organization through more or less formal research. In communicating with the management, it provides counsel on the publics points of view so that the management has the benefit of the knowledge when making decision. Also the PR department has to listen to the management, understand its decisions and behaviours, so that it can explain them to publics.

In this unit, we shall examine the PR set up in an organization, its functions including campaign and planning process. And finally we shall discuss PR in crisis management. The next unit will concentrate on some important aspects of PR, such as publics of PR, i.e. internal and external publics, publicity media for PR etc.

15.3 PR SET UP IN AN ORGANIZATION

Public relations or PR has a very important role in an organization. PR function is not the 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 influences on organization's status and reputation is what its own employees think and say about it.

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

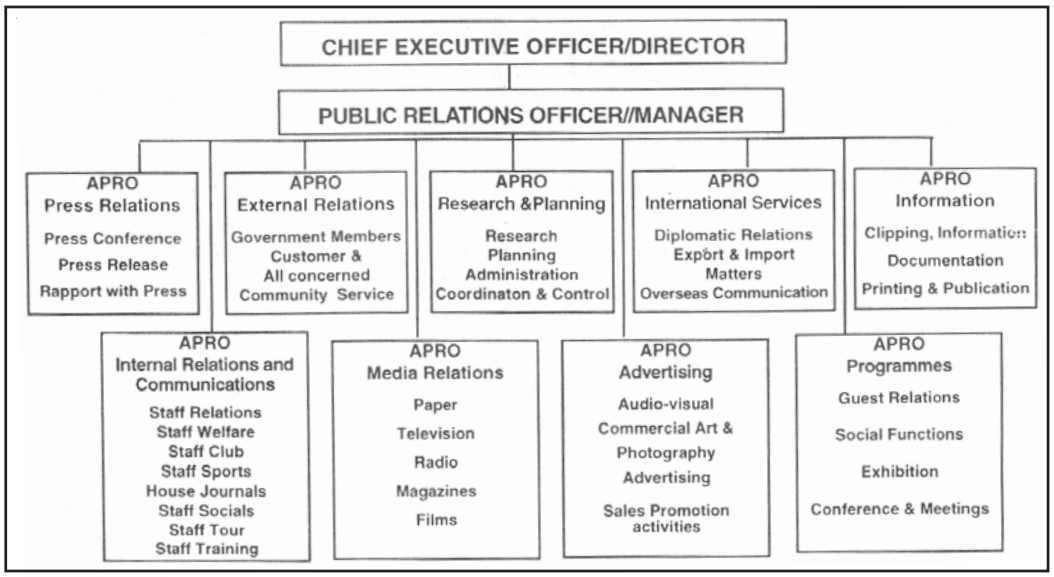
information to the publics. In order to initiate a steady flow of information covering all major aspects of the organization's operations, it is necessary to create official channels of communication between the Public Relations department and the senior person in charge of the various activities. Again 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.

15.3.1 Status of PR department in an Organization

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 goodwill 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 employer or, we can say, between the top brass and the other employees including 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.

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 of the publics.

Public Relations Department of a large organization



As we have seen in the above graphics, 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 (APRO), who are assigned different PR tasks, such as media relations, research and planning, information, advertising etc.

15.3.2 Functions of a PR department

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 of 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.

However, theire are certain standard functions of the Public Relations as listed below:

1. MEDIA RELATIONS

- The PR department has to maintain a good relation with different press, electronic media. If necessary a responsible officer of the department should visit the different media houses.
- The PR department has to liaison with the Information and Public Relations Department of the govt., such as PIB, AIR, Doordarshan, DIPR etc.

2. PUBLICATION AND PRODUCTION OF CORPORATE LITERATURE

- The PR department has to prepare various advertisements, Notifications etc. The department has to produce the audio visual advertisements and prepare ad copy with illustrated layouts.
- The PR department has also to prepare and publish brochures, leaflets, annual reports, booklets and other publicity materials.
- In the modern ages some PR departments prepare various audio visual materials like documentaries, video magazines, special events' videography etc.

3. EXHIBITIONS AND TRADE FAIRS

- The PR department has to participate in exhibitions, trade fairs, melas etc. It is an important task of the PR department, because in the exhibition the PR department can participate in an interpersonal communication with the people, who are interested in the field.

4. SEMINARS, CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS AND OTHER IMPORTANT EVENTS.

- The PR department has to organize some seminars, workshops and some special events to improve their internal public and to build a favourable image before the external public. The department should also provide support services for organizing seminars, conferences, workshops, national events to other organizations or institutions of their respective fields.

5. LIBRARY AND REFERENCE SERVICES

- The PR department has to preserve press clippings; media response etc. and should subscribe to different newspapers, periodicals, journals etc.

6. TOURS AND TRAVELS

- The PR department has also to arrange media Programmes, Travels and Tour arrangements, if the department wants to disseminate information regarding their activities, which are taking place in the field.

7. PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND RECEPTION CELL

- The following are the important tasks of a PR department-
- Arranging a good reception
- Receiving of grievances and monitoring
- Providing guidance to public and providing information
- Sale of Plans, Books, Application Forms, etc.
- Implementing the Right to Information Act 2005.
- The PR department has to receive applications for layouts, building permissions, and provide information to the applicants.

The PR department always maintains liaison with the appropriate governmental units at local, state and national level; reports trends in Government affecting the company; advises action as needed; helps prepare for and direct corporate

appearances before investing bodies or legislative hearing; directs programmes designed to promote the company's point of view in legislative or regulatory matters.

15.3.3 Responsibilities of a PR department

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 the management, information on public attitudes and views about the company and/or the industry it serves;
3. Preparing all policy and financial statements and conveying company affairs to the Press, TV and radio. Handling day-to-day enquiries from 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

1. What is the primary need of a Public Relations department in an organization?

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2. Name the functions of a PR department in connection with maintaining library and reference?

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ACTIVITY: 15.1

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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15.4 PR campaigns and programmes

The organization's Public Relations policy is based on the fact that the organization recognizes the value of public interest in its activities. Because of this, it aims to keep the public fully and accurately informed of the activities

so far as this is consistent with reasonable commercial prudence.

Campaigns are a significant part of the Public Relations profession and should be carried out with careful planning and thorough management. Specific step-by-step measures should be taken when planning any PR campaign to ensure that it meets the objectives set or, in other words, achieves what needs to be achieved. Basically, a PR campaign is a period of PR activity involving several events and techniques but with definite dates of starting and ending.

There are many different reasons to conduct a Public Relations campaign. Before launching a PR campaign, the PR department should clearly form the outline goals. For example-

- To inform the public about the organization or the changes in the organization;
- To build awareness among potential customers as the organization enters into a new market;
- To improve a poor reputation or correct misunderstandings;
- To persuade customers that the organization can maintain its supply standard while building new accounts or establishing new partnerships.

So, to achieve the goals, a PR department should design a well planned PR campaign. The following are some stages to launch a successful Public Relations campaign:

RESEARCH

Research is the examination of statistics and other information regarding the past, present, and future trends or performance that enables analysts to recommend to investors which stocks to buy or sell in order to maximize their return and minimize their risk. Research is the most important task for a PR campaign. So before going to launch a PR plan, the concerned department should pursue a research.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

The research carried out by the PR department should clearly define

the current situation with regard to the campaign. Depending on what is involved, this might include an organization's current situation in the market, how it is perceived by customers or staff or how it fares financially.

OBJECTIVES

After knowing the problem(s) of the organization, the department can then define the objectives of the campaign. The objectives are what is expected to be the end result of the PR activity. The objectives must be specific, measurable, achievable and realistic. Depending on the situation, sometimes the objectives can be set initially before the research is undertaken.

IDENTIFYING PUBLICS

The research carried out in the initial stages of the planning process should have identified each public which is relevant to the campaign. This is crucial to ensure that the key messages are communicated as effectively as possible. The research should also identify each public's current attitude to the situation allowing to tailor the key messages appropriately.

IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS

Once the publics of this campaign have been categorized, it is then important to identify who the stakeholders are. A stakeholder analysis is not as specific as identifying publics as it looks at everyone that is involved in the campaign as opposed to those who need to be communicated to. Publics can also be categorized as stakeholders.

Stakeholder : A person, group, organization, or system who affects or can be affected by an organisation's action.

KEY MESSAGES

After identifying the problems and the current situation of the organization (both internally and externally), then the department has to plan what the organization wants to say. Every PR campaign needs to have a set of messages that forms the main thrust of the communication. These messages

need to be clear, concise and readily understood. Key messages are important for two reasons. First, they are an essential part of the attitude-forming process and, second, they demonstrate the effectiveness of the communication.

STRATEGY

The strategy in a PR campaign is often confused with the tactics. However, the strategy is the foundation on which a tactical programme is built. The strategy is usually the overlying mechanism of a PR campaign from which the tactics are deployed to meet the objectives.

TACTICS

The PR profession has a number of tactics (or tools) in its armoury. The challenge is to choose the right tactics to meet the objectives. Again, depending on what type of campaign the departments are involved in, it might use media relations, lobbying, events, interviews, consultations, newsletters, competitions, conferences, photography, video news releases etc.

TIMESCALE

To do the overall strategy and tactics a PR department should allocate a time for it. A timescale allows the PR department to co-ordinate the tactics appropriately and helps to complete the task within the deadlines. Not only that, if there are certain future events that relate to the campaign, the department can tailor a tactic in the timescale to coincide.

BUDGET

Allocating the budget is an essential part of a campaign; so all costs should be taken into consideration. The primary reason for a budget is that it also allows to allocate money to the specific areas of the campaign.

CRISIS ISSUES AND MANAGEMENT PLACE

Risk is an inevitable part of some PR campaign. So to be thoroughly

prepared for a problem that may occur is paramount importance. For that detailed information on devising a crisis communications plan (CCP) is to be prepared.

EVALUATION

Evaluation is an ongoing process, particularly in a long-term PR campaign; so it is critical to constantly review all specific elements. The evaluation is vital in order to discover which parts of the campaign were successful and which were not. Not only that, it also helps determine what the current situation is after the PR activity has ended. The evaluation process is the 'added value' of PR and is something that should not be neglected.

So, if a PR department successfully pursues the above stages, then the PR campaign will be successful and the PR department will be able to build the reputation and a favourable image before their target audience, external and internal public as well.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS : B

Q 3. What do you mean by a PR campaign?

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Q 4. What is research? Why it is important in a PR campaign?

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ACTIVITY : 15.2

Prepare a PR campaign utilizing your preferable PR tools.

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15.5 PUBLIC RELATIONS AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

A crisis in Public Relations puts an organization in the unfortunate position of being in a defensive posture. This posture can be maintained, however, without compromising the crisp, aggressive, and professional attitude toward information dissemination that should characterize practices all the time, whether during a crisis or not. If handled properly, the only distinguishing feature of a crisis is that the media will come to the PR department at times of crisis and the PR practitioners should spend all the time to provide them necessary information regarding the crisis.

Before going to discuss the crisis management and Public Relations, let us discuss the meaning of crisis first. A crisis can be defined as a dramatic change, usually for the worse. It may be a disaster, an event which involves loss of life or extensive damage of property; or it may be a situation when an organization finds itself under unwelcome scrutiny because of its behaviour or that of its staff. A crisis may occur as a result of an accident; it may arise because of the negligence or criminal behaviour of an individual or organization; or it may happen to a company as a result of product tampering or other sabotage. It may happen suddenly or there may be a slow build-up as a local difficulty escalates into a full-blown crisis. Whatever the nature of a crisis may be whatever an accident, a murder, violent strike, burglary or scandal, nothing should be kept as confidential.

The PR department of an organization must do to expedite the accurate handling of information in co-operation with the media. At the time of crisis,

internal and external communication channels should be kept open. Media person are to be kept abreast of all the latest information. The department should assure free flow of communication within the outlines of the Public Relations plan. Finally, the media may be thanked for the cooperation, after the crisis is over.

As mentioned above, media relations may be particularly strained during times of emergency. During stressful and unexpected situations it is the media's main purpose to gather the striking news which a crisis usually represents. The media, at this time of emergency, has to be handled effectively in a composed manner. Confrontation of any kind is fatal to the interest of the organization. The PR department should not try to suppress information. Rather, it should notify the media. The top Public Relations person should channelise all the information that is issued by the management. If necessary, a special information officer may be set up for making frequent statements available. The PR department must be careful not to speculate by trying to estimate the damage prematurely. It should also not try to pin the blame on some individual before investigation has established it.

A team of PR practitioners of the PR department of the organization should take responsibility for drawing up a plan which can be taken down from the shelf and activated when required. This means the plan needs to be clear and unequivocal so that whoever uses it can understand what they are required to do. But it also needs to be flexible enough to be adapted for whatever crisis occurs. There is little point, for example, in stipulating exactly how many telephone lines need to be available in a specified room which will be used as a press centre, when the crisis may happen miles away and portable telecommunications will be needed. The important thing is to make clear whose job it is to ensure that a press facility is made available, and that that person knows how to provide such a facility at a moment's notice.

Members of the team should meet regularly even when the crisis plan has been drawn up. It is important that they keep in touch and that the plan is continually reviewed and updated to take account not only of changes in

personnel and within the organization, but to keep up to date with media contacts and improvements in technology.

A plan to deal with a plane crash that involves fatalities must lead to the swift delivery of accurate information to the media and the general public. This plan must includes:

1. The establishment of a standard operating procedure (SOP) to be implemented at times of crisis.
2. A general timetable for the implementation of SOP.
3. Communication tools and methods, including sample press releases, organizing press briefings etc.
4. Methods of evaluation.

In textbook terminology, steps one and two are the planning steps, step three is the communication step, and step four is the evaluative step. Generally, this plan outlines only what must be done rather than what could be done. For this reason, it allows for flexibility and the creative input of ideas that the individual situation will demand.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: C

Q. 5. Define the term ‘crisis’.

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Q 6. What do you mean by Crisis management?

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Q 7. What is the importance of PR in crisis management?

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ACTIVITY: 15.3

Observe the Public Relations activities carried out in a Bank near your locality and prepare a list of internal as well as external publics of that bank.

15.6 PR AND CODE OF CONDUCT

The Public Relations Society of India (PRSI) is the national association of Public Relations practitioners and communication specialists in India. It is the pioneer organization that has been trying to develop PR as a profession and it always tries to maintain the standard of the PR practitioners' job. The society declares an important Code of Conduct that each and every PR practitioner should follow. If a member of the Society is found to have infringed this Code during the course of his professional duties, he will be deemed to be guilty of serious misconduct calling for an appropriate penalty.

Accordingly, each member of the Society shall endeavour -

1. to contribute to the achievement of the moral and cultural conditions enabling human beings to reach their full stature and enjoy the indefeasible rights to which they are entitled, under the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights".
2. to establish communication patterns and channels which, by fostering the free flow of essential information, will make each member of the group feel that he is being kept informed; and also give him an awareness of his own personal involvement and responsibility and of his solidarity with other members.
3. to conduct himself always and in all circumstances in such a manner as to deserve and secure the confidence of those with whom he comes into contact.

4. to bear in mind that, because of the relationship between his profession and the public, his conduct, even in private, will have an impact on the way in which the profession as a whole is appraised.

Each member of the Society **shall undertake –**

1. to observe, in the course of his professional duties, the moral principles and rules of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights".
2. to pay due regard to and uphold human dignity and to recognize the right of each individual to judge for himself;
3. to establish the moral, psychological and intellectual condition for dialogue in its true sense, and to recognize the right of the parties involved to state their case and express their views.
4. to act in all circumstances in such a manner as to take account of the respective interests of the parties involved, both the interests of the organization which he serves and the interests of the public concerned.
5. to carry out his undertakings and commitments which are always to be so worded as to avoid any misunderstanding and to show loyalty and integrity in all circumstance to as to keep the confidence of the clients or employers, past or present, and of all the public that are affected by his actions.
6. not subordinating the truth to other requirements.
7. will not take circulating information, which is not based on established and ascertainable facts.
8. not taking part in any venture or undertaking, which is unethical dishonest or capable of impairing human dignity and integrity.
9. not using any "manipulative" methods or techniques designed to create subconscious motivations which the individual cannot control of own free will and so cannot be held accountable for the action on the hints for Organize Public Meetings.
10. arranging meetings is often the task of P.R.O.

The above mentioned codes were adopted by the PRSI in accordance with the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) codes. IPRA code of professional conduct and ethics was primarily adopted by the International Public Relations Association at its general assembly in Venice, in May 1961 and it was finally adopted by the IPRA council at its 1965 meeting in Athens, Greece. It is popularly known as the' Code of Athens'. This code and its principles were inspired by the UN declaration of human right.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: D

Q 8. What do you mean by code of conduct?

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Q 9. Mention at least two codes of PR that adopted by PRSI.

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15.7 LET US SUM UP

The primary need of the Public Relations department in an organization is to establish and maintain a good relation with its internal as well as external publics. The role of Public Relations in an organization is to develop commitment, motivation and morale among the people to enable them to function in different circumstances.

PR campaign is a period of PR activity involving several events and techniques but with definite start and end dates. A crisis Public Relations situation put an organization in the unfortunate position of being in a

defensive posture. This posture can be maintained, however, without compromising with the crisp, aggressive, and professional attitude toward information dissemination that should typify practices all the time, whether crisis or calm.



15.8 FURTHER READINGS

1. Fundamentals of Public Relations by K B Dutta, Publisher: Akansha, Delhi.
2. Management of Public Relations and Communication by S. Sengupta, publisher: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., Delhi.



15.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q no 1: The primary need of the Public Relations department in an organization is to establish and maintain a good relation with its internal as well as external publics.

Ans to Q no 2: The functions of a PR department in connection with maintaining library and reference are to collect and preserve Press Clippings, Media Response and Subscribing to Newspapers, Periodicals, etc.

Ans to Q no 3: A PR campaign is a period of PR activity involving several events and techniques but with definite start and end dates.

Ans to Q no 4: Research is the examination of statistics and other information regarding past, present, and future trends or performance that enables analysts to recommend to investors as to which stocks to buy or sell in order to maximize their return and minimize their risk. Research is the most important task for a PR campaign. So before going to launch a PR plan, the concerned department should pursue a research.

Ans to Q no 5: A crisis can be defined as a dramatic change, usually for the worse. It may be a disaster: an event which involves loss of life or extensive damage to property; or it may be a situation when an organization finds itself under unwelcome scrutiny because of its behaviour or that of its staff.

Ans to Q no 6: Crisis management is an action taken by an organization in response to unexpected events or situations with potentially negative effects that threaten resources and people or the success and continued operation of the organization. Crisis management includes the development of plans to reduce the risk of a crisis occurring and to deal with any crisis that do occurs, and the implementation of these plans so as to minimize the impact of crises and assist the organization to recover from them. Crisis situations may occur as a result of external factors such as the development of a new product by a competitor or changes in legislation, or internal factors such as a product failure or faulty decision making, and often involve the need to make quick decisions on the basis of uncertain or incomplete information.

Ans to Q no 7: A crisis is an unpredictable and unstable situation that can have dangerous consequences for an organization. It is imperative to make proactive plan for the impending crisis. This enables mitigation of the loss due to the crisis. Efficient Public Relations activities are therefore, very important aspect of crisis management. A team of PR practitioners should take responsibility for drawing up a plan which can be taken down from the shelf and activated when required. This means the plan needs to be clear and unequivocal so that whoever uses it can understand what it is they are required to do.

Ans to Q no 8 : Code of Conduct is a statement and description of required behaviors, responsibilities, and actions expected of employees of an organization or of members of a professional body. A code of conduct usually focuses on ethical and socially responsible issues and applies to individuals, providing guidance on how to act in cases of doubt or confusion.

Ans to Q no 9: The following are two codes of PR adopted by PRSI –

a. To contribute to the achievement of the moral and cultural conditions enabling human beings to reach their full stature and enjoy the indefeasible rights to which they are entitled, under the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights".

b. To establish communication patterns and channels which, by fostering the free flow of essential information, will make each member of the group feel that he is being kept informed -and also give him an awareness of his own personal involvement and responsibility and of his solidarity with other members.



15.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions :

Q.1 : When was the International Public Relations Association established?

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

Q 1. Discuss the role and responsibility of a PR department in an organization.

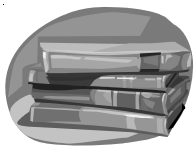
Q 2. Enumerate the standard functions of a PR department.

Q 3. What do you mean by a PR campaign. Prepare a plan for a PR campaign on behalf of an organization.

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

Q 1. What is Crisis? How can a PR department play an important role in a crisis situation.

Q 2. What is Code of Conduct? Discuss the PRSI Code of Conduct.



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