UNIT-5 : PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Propaganda and publicity

5.4 Public Relations Officer

5.4.1 Public Relations Officer - Duties and Responsibilities

5.4.2 Qualities of a good Public Relations Officer

5.6 Let Us Sum up

5.7 Further Reading

5.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

5.9 Model Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to -

- describe the terms propaganda and publicity
- discuss the role of Public Relations Officer in an organization
- outline the duties and responsibilities of a PRO
- explain the qualities, of successful PRO
- discuss the role of PRSI in PR profession in India
- explain PRCI, PRCAI – important PR organizations

5.2 INTRODUCTION

By now you must already be familiar with the basic concept of Public Relations and how it is important in the present day. We have also discussed

the growth and development of modern PR. In this unit we would try to explain you propaganda & publicity as two important concepts related to Public Relations besides various 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 any Public Relations programme of an organization largely depend 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 PR with the publics of the organization.

5.3 PROPAGANDA AND PUBLICITY

PROPAGANDA

An important influence on public opinion is propaganda. It is a deliberately evolved and guided campaign to influence people and to accept a given view, sentiment or value (W. Schramm, 'Process and effect of Mass Communication'). In the propaganda process opposing views are dumped in a dustbin. It is a thrust upon the masses to create positive attitude towards it without caring for its rational or moral insinuations. Generally it can be said that propaganda is a communication process intended for audience through enlightenment, persuasion, or dedicated religions, charitable, political and social service institutions to influence the thoughts and actions of others for their best interests. Propaganda alters or modifies the uses of people by influencing their emotional attitudes and feelings. Its objective is to implant an attitude in the minds of people that is deemed natural and logical. Propaganda leads to collective actions. It is different from advertising in the sense that advertising tries to influence the actions and thought process

of individuals. Propaganda influences the thought process of groups. Hence, Schramm opines that propaganda operates to put an end to discussion and reflection. During the elections, the political parties resort to propaganda campaigns to malign the images of their opponents.

Wilbur Schramm outlined some methods of Propaganda, such as –

(1) Define the facts: misrepresenting facts and supplying wrong sets of information to the public through Propaganda.

(2) Use in-group out-group attitudes: Two opponent groups create the feeling of dissent. The groups also teach their own members to spite other groups. This is called in-group out-group attitude. The Propagandist creates positive feelings in the minds of the groups.

(3) Use emotional attitudes: The propagandist can identify the emotional attitudes and prejudices that are already present in people. If he is able to associate his views with some favourable attitudes or prejudices of people, if opposing views are associated with unfavourable attitudes, they are likely to be eschewed. Hence, the propagandist in order to create a favourable impression for his thoughts smartly uses the preexisting opinions and attitudes of the people in question.

Encarta Encyclopedia describes Propaganda as the tool of dissemination of ideas and information for the purpose of inducing or intensifying specific attitudes and actions.

Propaganda may be disseminated by or for individuals, businesses, ethnic associations, religious organizations, political organizations, and governments at every level. No matter what its objective, propaganda attempts to persuade through rational or emotional appeal, or through the organization of personal opinion. Efficient use of the communication media is central to these efforts.

PUBLICITY

The publicity is to reflect the performance and get public acknowledgement and appreciation. Many organizations of the new era use publicity to promote their ideas, concepts or products. Publicity has become an essential function of PR. PR executives to the media provide the contents of news. The media decision makers may or may not use these sets of information. PR expert Cutlip defined publicity as "---- information from an outside source that is used by the media because the information has news value. It is an uncontrolled method of placing messages in the media because the source does not pay the media for placement". Good Public Relations start with good performance as viewed by the public. The function of publicity is to reflect the performance and get public acknowledgement and appreciation for it. It is a communication tool, which is concerned with dissemination of information about an organization to attract attention, to gain recognition, to build image and to win the approval of the target public.

According to the Handbook of Journalism and Mass Communication, we may broadly categorize publicity into seven types:

1) News

The most common type of publicity is news of local, regional or national interest. There are two types of news publicity - spontaneous news and planned news. Spontaneous news publicity originates from an unplanned event, such as a strike in an organisation, major accident, fire, explosion, flood or drought etc. News media are notified and they may send reporters, photographers and camera crew to the news source. Planned news publicity originates in the day-to-day developments and occurrences within organization, which may be of news value and public interest. News releases are prepared and distributed by public relations staff at the headquarters.

2) Business feature Articles

Business feature articles are an important type of publicity published by business, trade and technical media, prepared by industrial firms to support

their marketing objectives. A business feature defines problems common to an industry and describes solutions to these problems. A business feature may be developed from speeches discussing product applications. Independent, or freelancers, writers and photographers, whose work is coordinated by a member of the Public Relations staff, prepare many business features.

3) Service Feature Article

Service Feature Article is written to provide newspaper and magazine readers with information, advice and suggestions on home, fashion, health, food, beauty and care etc.

4) Financial publicity

Financial news releases, feature, annual and quarterly reports, organisation and coverage of annual meetings, new products and other financial news, which are the examples of many news releases and feature articles appearing on the financial pages of daily newspapers and financial magazines. These are a few kinds of financial publicity.

5) Product publicity

Product publicity gives information about complex technical product or service to the consumers to enable them to choose intelligently from a wide variety of products in the market.

6) Pictorial Publicity

It is a publicity through pictures and still photographs through newspapers and magazines. Many companies maintain cameramen for photographic coverage of special events.

7) Emergency Publicity

To ensure proper handling of media relations during an emergency, the Public Relations department should prepare, in advance, a carefully considered emergency publicity programme.

Publicity Media

Newspaper is the major medium of publicity. They are read by a large number of people and they influence public opinion. Newspapers appeal to the target audiences providing opportunities for product publicity.

Magazines are an important medium for product news, feature stories and pictorial publicity. It affords space to tell a complete story. Magazines are particularly suitable for service or educational publicity articles. The attractive appearance, good paper quality and five-color combination of magazines make them ideal for picture publicity.

Radio and television publicity has developed rapidly throughout the world and in the country. Radio covers 95% of the geographical area while TV covers 80%. TV is becoming one of the most effective media for publicity because of its audiovisual characteristics.

Good relationships with editors, editorial writers, publishers, columnists and news broadcasters are vitally important to secure publicity. Personal contacts, press conferences, media previews, media management launchers and media kits are the most effective weapons of publicity.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. 1. What do you mean by propaganda?

.....

.....

Q. 2. Explain at least three types of publicity.

.....

.....

Q. 3. What is news?

.....

.....

Q. 4. What do you mean by publicity?

.....

.....

ACTIVITY 5.1



1. Open a daily newspaper and try to identify various news items which are published as some publicity.

---

2. Visit a nearby private educational institute and collect information on their publicity plan and try to prepare a report on it.

5.4 PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

The 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. He is responsible for image buidling of the concerned organisation and its functionaries.

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

5.4.1 Public Relations Officer - Duties and Responsibilities

Public Relations is an essential tool of modern management. The effectiveness and success of the Public Relations programmes of an organization largely depend on the calibre of the personnel

entrusted with the job. The PRO may aptly be compared to 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 mechanisms 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.

Public Relations Officer as a good communicator

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. Inevitably the Public Relations Officer 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 prerequisite for successful PR. The Public Relations Officer must be sufficiently experienced in writing for the newspapers, magazines and other print media, but may not be so well versed in designing exhibition, producing films or presenting a radio programme. However, it should be possible for the Public Relations Officer to organize and manage different programmes.

Association with Top Management

As mentioned earlier, the PRO acts not only as the source of information in 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 top management and decision-making. 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.

Liaison with Mass Media

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 and organizational 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 evasiveness.

Right Image Builder of the Organization

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 its keeps with the

public at large. In order to succeed as an image-builder, the PRO should first enhance his own image and image of his profession, within and outside the organization.

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 goodwill with staff, suppliers & customers
16. To improve industrial relations
17. To promote products or services.
18. To maximize profitability by projecting a corporate identity.

QUALIFICATIONS OF PRO

While appointing PROs most of the organizations prefer graduates with a Degree or 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 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.

Experience

For senior level P.R. men, 3-7 years experience in Publicity, Journalism or Public Relations in a reputed Government or private organization is insisted upon. While journalistic background is a great advantage for Public Relations work. It may not be correct to claim that only journalist can be a good P.R.O.s.

Salary

The pay scales of P.R. personnel differ from organization to organization. Starting salaries depend to a large extent on educational qualifications, experiences, at the level of entry and the financial condition of the organization.

Responsibility of a Public Relations 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 Government.
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.



LET US KNOW

Qualities of a Good PRO:

1. Good communicator.
2. Smart.
3. Command over various language.
4. Punctual.
5. Presence of mind.
6. Good knowledge on the background of the organization
7. Knowledge of the national & state policies.
8. Good interpreter.
9. Media awareness.
10. Cool & calm.
11. Good personality.
12. Tactfulness.
13. Farsightedness
14. Hard working.
15. Organizing capacity.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. 5. Who is a PR practitioner?

.....

.....

.....

Q. 6. Write at least five duties and responsibilities of a PRO.

.....

.....

.....

Q. 7. What are the basic qualities required by a good PR person?

.....

.....



ACTIVITY : 5.2

1. Visit a corporate organization and a Govt. office and meet the PR practitioner of those organizations. Try to make a comparative study on the duties and responsibilities of both the PR practitioners.

---

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



5.6 LET US SUM UP

Propaganda is a concerted set of messages aimed at influencing the opinions or behaviours of large number of people. It is basically an aggressive communication that manipulates public opinion. It is generally carried out through media that is capable of reaching a large number of people and effectively persuading them for or against a cause. Publicity is the deliberate attempt to manage the public's perception of a subject.

The Public Relations Officer is mainly a communicator. He has to communicate the ideas and policies of the organization to the public through various media such as the press, TV, radio, film, oral communication, exhibition etc. A public relations officer uses all forms of media and communication to build, maintain and manage the reputation of organizations ranging from public bodies or services to businesses and voluntary organizations.

A few PR organisations are there in India with the prime objective to develop and improve the PR profession in the country. Among them Public Relations Society of India (PRSI), Public Relations Council of India (PRCI), Public Relations Consultants Association of India etc. are significant.



5.7 FURTHER READING

1. Balan, KR, Applied Public Relations and Communication. New Delhi: Sultan Chand & Sons.
2. Sengupta, S. (2009) Management of Public Relations and Communication New Delhi : Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.



5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No 1 : Propaganda as the tool of dissemination of ideas and information for the purpose of inducing or intensifying specific attitudes and actions to influence people to accept a given view, sentiment or value.

Ans to Q. No 2 : The following are three types of publicity:

- **News:** The most common type of publicity is the news of local, regional or national interest. There are two types of news publicity- Spontaneous news and planned news.
- **Service Feature Article:** S.F.A is written to provide newspaper and magazine readers with information, advice and suggestions on home, fashion, health, food, beauty and care etc.
- **Financial publicity:** Financial news release, feature, dividend declarations measures, annual and quarterly reports, annual meetings, new products and other financial news are the examples of many news releases and feature articles that appear on the financial pages.

Ans to Q. No 3 : News is information about an event that happens in the society, which affects the lives of the people or has the tendency to affect the lives of the people, directly or indirectly, or has immediate value for the people at large.

Ans to Q. No 4 : Publicity is the deliberate attempt to manage the public's perception of a subject. It is information from an outside source that is used by the media because the information has news value.

Ans to Q. No 5 : The 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. to build the image of the organization.

Ans to Q. No 6 : Some of the main duties and responsibilities of a PRO are -

- Maintain the relation with the publics.

- Uphold the relation with the press.
- Handle the publications.
- Maintain relation with the local community.
- Handle the financial relation.
- Maintain relation with the Govt.

Ans to Q. No 7 : The following are some of the basic qualities needed to be a good PRO.

- He should be a good communicator.
- He should be smart.
- He should have command over various languages.
- He should be punctual.
- He should have presence of mind.



5.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions

Q1. Which is the most common type of publicity?

Q2. Should a public relations officer be a good communicator?

B. Short Questions (answer each question in 150-200 words)

Q. 1. What do you mean by Propaganda? Do you think that it is a way of publicity? What are the basic differences between propaganda and advertising?

Q. 2. Who is a Public Relations Officer? Enumerate his duties and responsibilities towards an organization. Discuss the essential qualities to be a good Public Relations Officer.

C. Long Questions (answer each question in 300-500 words)

Q. 1. Write an essay on Public Relations Officer as a good communicator.

Q. 2. Discuss some PR bodies of India.