Unit - 9: PUBLIC RELATIONS UNDER PRIVATE SECTOR UNDERTAKINGS

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9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the major objectives of public relations in the private sector
- describe the significance of public relations in private sector
- understand the different roles public relations play in private sector
- understand corporate communication.

9.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous units we have learned the significance of public relations in building and maintaining goodwill between an organisation and its stakeholders. It has to be understood that the role of public relations in any organisation depends on various factors such as the type and size of the organisation, the different perceptions of the top management of the organisation, and the skills and capabilities of the public relations practitioner. In large organisations, the role of public relations expands to the point of being a participant in the policy making process along with the top management personnel.A company such as the Tata Group carries its daily operations in a highly competitive environment. Hence, they are more sensitive and cautious to policy issues, public attitudes and opinions and corporate reputation. In such organisations, public relations departments

stress on establishing convergence of both traditional and new media,finding sponsorship of events, writing executive speeches, and offering counselling management on issues that could potentially affect any stakeholders. The public relations departments have great autonomy and authority in these organisations.

In contrast, a small-scale organization offers a standardised product or service feels few public pressures and little governmental regulatory interest. It thus has very less public relations activity, and basic duties are limited to producing the company newsletter and issuing routine news releases. It may have no input into management decisions and policy formation.

The most admired *Fortune* 500 corporations, in terms of reputation, tend to think of public relations as more of a strategic management tool. A study by the University of Southern California (USC) Annenberg Strategic Public Relations Center found that these companies, compared to others, dedicate a larger percentage of their gross revenues to public relations activities, extensively use outside public relations firms to supplement their own large staffs, and don't have public relations personnel report to the marketing department. *PR Week*, summarizing the survey, said, "PR Departments that closely align their own goals with their companies' strategic business goals receive greater executive support, have larger budgets, and have a higher perceived contribution to their organizations' success."

Public relations departments are present in both public and private sector. In this unit, we will look in to the objectives and functions of public relations in private sector undertakings.

9.3 OBJECTIVES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN PRIVATE SECTOR

The primary difference between public and private sector jobs is that public sector jobs are within a government agency, whereas, private sector jobs are those where employees are working for non-governmental agencies. This includes jobs within individual businesses as well as within

other types of company organisations.The competitive business scene in today's era makes it critical for any public relations practitioner to understand how to apply public relations planning process and programme evaluation practices that help ensure in achieving success on completion of goals. It is important for PR practitioners to be able to solve challenging and complex problems, set and achieve the target goals and objectives. They also will be able to track the opinions, beliefs and attitudes of the key publics. This will help in developing and employing programme strategies that will have the desired results. Despite having a well researchedprogramme in public relationsmanagement, it cannot guarantee success, but, it allows practitioners to maximize their abilities. A more strategic management style can help control the ways a situation will develop and the outcomes practitioners achieve in those situations.

Public Relations is the assembly of facts, ideas about individuals and institutions for various purposes, such as to attract attention, gain prestige, publicise products, or to satisfy the public interest in an institution or of an individual.In the increasingly competitive environment in the private sector, it is important for the future public relations practitioners to understand the important objectives of the public relations in the private sector.

Organisations are part of a social system which comprises individuals or publics such as employees, investors, suppliers, distributors and so on, who are all involved with it. The role of public relations is to develop and maintain relationships with these groups in order for the organisation to meet its goals. James Grunig and Todd Hunt proposed that organisations typically develop a formal communication function 'when the organisation or its publics behave in a way that has consequences upon the other'. If these consequences are adverse, then a public relations problem or issue is created. According to F. Jefkins, PR consists of all forms of planned communication outwards and inwards, between an organization and its publics for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understanding. By this it can be understood that the purpose of public relations in a private sector is not just merely about maintaining goodwill

between an organisation and its publics, but, it is also about achieving specific objectives.

The terms goals and objectives tend to be thrown around as if they are interchangeable.For example, James Grunig and Todd Hunt, stated goals and objectives is the same, but moved on to 'define goals as broader and more general than objectives. Goals are generalised ends that provide a framework for decision making and behaviour but that are too broad to help much in making day-to-day decisions.Objectives, on the other hand, are ends in view – expected solutions to day-to-day problems that can be used to deal with the problem and to evaluate whether it has been solved or not.

In organisations especially in the large scale ones, the most common planning tool used by communication managers is known as management by objectives (MBO). In a general business context, the term objective is most commonly associated with the concept of management by objectives (MBO).It is an effects-oriented process for developing campaign programmes. MBO requires any public relation practitioner to make strategic decisions. The MBO approach will help any PR practitioner understand the campaign aspects that cannot be compromised. Moreover, the MBO approach can provide persuasive reasoning the practitioner will need to convince the key decision makers i.e. the top management that the campaign elements the practitioner identifies as essential really are essential. In short, the MBO approach gives the PR practitioner credibility, flexibility, and control.

The learner needs to understand that in present time, where industries and the organisations are in a highly competitive stage, where the traditional role of a PR professional will not be fruitful to achieve the organisation's goals. In earlier times, traditional practitioners use to do lots of communication activities, that may have included producing newsletters,brochures, news releases, and organising special events or press conferences. On the other hand, using MBO public relations have lots of goals they plan to accomplish. Their perspective is more holistic. As a result, everything has a clear,effects-oriented purpose. The practitioner organises their activities according to a results perspective, they can show

the need and the effectiveness of each effort more readily than traditional practitioners can. Each newsletter,brochure, news release, and special event serves a clear purpose that is part of a larger framework.

W.P. Ehling described six objectives that PR practitioners set to achieve in an organisation:

1. *Conceptualization.* A PR practitioner must hold the big picture and be able to identify and organise the smaller elements to fit that larger picture.The goal is to identify specific tasks and responsibilities that need to be fulfilled to maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the public on which its success depends, such as budgeting, goal setting, strategic planning, organising, administering, and evaluating.

2. *Monitoring.* Monitoring is, in other words, research. The practitioner will carry out extensive research on issues to stay ahead of emerging trends and to keep a check on potential crises that may occur. The objective here is to anticipate and evaluate opportunities and challenges that arise out of the organization's interactions and relationships with other organisations and societies.

3. *Planning.* The practitioner must be able to build strategies that will guide the organisation through the opportunities and challenges identified in the monitoring process. The goal is to ensure the achievement of measurable results that fulfill needs identified in the monitoring process.

4. *Organisation and coordination.* The PR practitioner must make effective use of available resources. These include budget and personnel within the organisation as well as opportunities for cooperative partnerships with other organisations that can help to achieve mutually beneficial results. The goal is the effective and efficient implementation strategies for the communication programmes developed in the planning process.

5. *Administration.* The PR practitioner must fulfill the objectives made in the planning process. The PR practitioner will supervise the programs to activate and adjust communication programmes. Nothing ever goes exactly according to plan because resources and the environment continue to change; thus, the practitioner must maintain motivating, creative leadership throughout the implementation of each programme. The goal is the fulfillment of communication programme goals on budget and on deadline.

6. *Evaluation*. Every communication activity must have a clear purpose and an anticipated result. The practitioner must show results and an ability to use programme successes and failures as part of the monitoring process to develop even more effective future programmes. The goal is the accountability,credibility, and guidance to make future communication programmes even more successful.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. Describe the objectives of public relations in a private sector.

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9.4 PUBLIC RELATIONS IN PRIVATE SECTOR UNDERTAKINGS

A department of public relations, also called as corporate communications or a similar term, has been an integral part of the global industry scenario. If the learner reads the history of public relations unit, the learner will be aware that in the beginning, public relations department were about promotion and publicity. In a changing environment, the role of public relations is no longer the same. It exercises its influence on the top

level management of an organisation.It is faced with different pressures, and organisations increasingly see public relations not as publicity and one-way communication, but as a complex and dynamic process of negotiation and compromise with a number of key publics. Ideally today, professional public relations people assist top management in developing policy and communicating with various publics.

In the book ' Public Relations' , Dennis Wilcox states about the traditional management theory that divides any organisation into line and staff functions. "A line manager, comprises mainly a vice president of manufacturing, can delegate authority, set production goals, hire employees, and make policy. Staff employees, in contrast, have little or no direct authority. Instead, they indirectly influence the work of others through suggestions, recommendations, and advice".

According to accepted management theory, public relations is a staff function.Public relations employees in an organisation are experts in communication; line managers, including the CEO, rely on them to use their skills in preparing and processing data, making recommendations,and executing communication programmes to meet organisational objectives. **For example:** Public relations staff members may find through a community survey that the targeted publics have limited understanding of what the company manufactures. To improve the community's understanding and create greater communication engagement, the public relations department may recommend to top management that a community meeting be held to inform the public.

THE FUNCTIONS OF A PR SPECIALIST

Whether working for a corporation, an organisation, a government/ public PR department or a PR counsel firm, the learner will find that various jobs and services are common to all. The following are a few of the functions of a PR practitioner in a private sector:

- Coordination of media relations for the organisation and its divisions.
- Planning and implementation of the organisation's PR, public service and public interest programmes.

- Writing speeches for executives, press releases for the trade and consumer press.
- Arranging speakers, meetings, press conference, briefings and events.
- Writing and editing house publications, newsletters, and employee communications.
- Acting as spokesperson for organisations in events of accidents or disasters.
- Supervising audiovisual materials for sales meetings and financial presentations.
- Accompanying the chief executive officer and top management on business tours to arrange conventions.
- Working with financial staff on presentation of annual and quarterly reports.
- Providing corporate reputation research and positioning.
- Offering philanthropic investment counsel and planning.
- Tracking electronic, online and print media opportunities for clients.
- Organising major scientific and political congresses.
- Targeting politicians and other key decision-makers on behalf of clients' public affairs objectives.

The functions of a public relations or corporate communications department or public relations firm in the private sector are as follows:

Marketing communications : PR practitioners through using different media relations and PR tools (press release, press tours, brouchures) involve in promoting products and services of a client.

Research and evaluation : Scientific opinion surveys are conducted by the public relations practitioners to measure public attitudes and perceptions.

Crisis communication : Management is counselled on what to say and do in situations of emergency and damage. PR practitioners play a major role in communicating and persuading the targeted publics in times of crises.

During crises, the PR practitioners' prime focus is on reputation management.

Media analysis : Appropriate media, including social media, are examined by the team of PR practitioners for their ability to target specific messages to key publics.

Community relations : Management is counselled on ways to achieve official and public support for such projects as building or expanding a factory.

Events management : News conferences, anniversary celebrations, rallies, symposiums, and national conferences are planned and conducted by PR practitioners. They are important tools of promotion, brand recognition and publicity.

Employee communication: For the smooth functioning of an organisation it is necessary for the top level management to be in a good mutually benefitted relationship with its employees. If internal publics aren't satisfied and recognised for their efforts, serious issues can emerge in the long run.

Public affairs : Materials and testimony are prepared by the public relations practitioners for government hearings and regulatory bodies, and background briefings are prepared. They are prime external publics for any organisation.

Branding and corporate reputation : Advice is given on programmes to establish acompany brand and its reputation for quality. PR practitioners or communication professionals play a crucial role in maintaining a positive and favourable corporate identity and corporate image. Brand reputation management is an important function of a PR practitioner.

Financial relations : Management is counselled on ways to avoid takeover by another firm and effectively communicate with stockholders, security

analysts, andinstitutional investors.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q2. State any five functions of a public relations department.

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9.4.1 Corporate Communication roles of PR practitioners

Many a time it can be seen that the terms public relations and corporate communications are interchangeably used. Corporate communications has branched out of public relations but, today, the role of corporate communication is much greater and diverse than the traditional use of public relations. Corporate communication requires an emphasis, not only on external image improvement, but on internally directed activities to stimulate all employees to work together to support the company's overall objectives,rather than merely focusing on their functional tasks.

Cees B.M. van Riel and Charles J. Fombrun in their book, "The Essentials of Corporate Communication" defines corporate communication as the set of activities involved in managing and orchestrating all internal and external communications aimed at creating favourable starting points with stakeholders on which the company depends. Corporate communication consists of the dissemination of information by a variety of specialists and generalists in an organisation, with the common goal of enhancing the organisation's ability to retain its license to operate. The authors also state the responsibilities of corporate communication practitioners, they are as follows:

- to bring out the profile of the "company behind the brand" (corporate

branding);

- to develop initiatives that minimise issues and obstacles between the company's desired identity and brand features;
- to indicate who should perform which tasks in the field of communication;
- to formulate and execute effective procedures in order to facilitate decision making about matters concerning communication;
- to mobilise internal and external support behind corporate objectives.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q3. Explain the responsibilities of corporate communication practitioners.

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9.5 LET US SUM UP

- The primary difference between public and private sector jobs is that public sector jobs are within a government agency, whereas, private sector jobs are those where employees are working for non-governmental agencies.
- Objectives are ends in view – expected solutions to day-to-day problems that can be used to deal with the problem and to evaluate whether it has been solved or not.
- Conceptualization, monitoring, administration, organisation, coordination, planning and evaluation are the objectives of public relations in a private sector.
- Management by objectives (MBO) is an effects-oriented process for developing campaign programmes. MBO requires any public relation practitioner to make strategic decisions. The MBO approach will help

any PR practitioner understand the campaign aspects that cannot be compromised. Moreover, the MBO approach can provide persuasive reasoning the practitioner will need to convince the key decision makers i.e. the top management that the campaign elements the practitioner identifies as essential really are essential. In short, the MBO approach gives the PR practitioner credibility, flexibility, and control.

- **Some functions of a PR specialists:** Coordination of media relations for the organisation and its divisions.Planning and implementation of the organisation's PR, public service, and public interest programmes, writing speeches for executives, press releases for the trade and consumer press, arranging speakers, meetings, press conference, briefings and events, writing and editing house publications, newsletters, and employee communications and acting as spokesperson for organisations in events of accidents or disasters.
- Corporate communication is the set of activities involved in managing and orchestrating all internal and external communications aimed at creating favourable starting points with stakeholders on which the company depends. Corporate communication consists of the dissemination of information by a variety of specialists and generalists in an organisation, with the common goal of enhancing the organisation's ability to retain its license to operate.



9.6 FURTHER READING

1. Newsom, Doug, Turk V, Judy, Kruckeberg, Dean (2000). This is PR: The Realities of Public Relations. Seventh Edition. Singapore: Wadsworth Thomson Learning.
2. Wilcox, Dennis, Cameron, Glen, Reber, Bryan (2015). Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics. Eleventh Edition. Essex: Pearson.



9.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No 1 : Conceptualization, monitoring, administration, organisation, coordination, planning and evaluation are the objectives of public relations in a private sector.

Ans to Q. No 2 : The five functions of public relations department are:

- Marketing communications
- Research and evaluation
- Crisis communication
- Media analysis
- Community relations

Ans to Q. No 3 : The responsibilities of corporate communication practitioners are to bring out the profile of the "company behind the brand" (corporate branding);to develop initiatives that minimise issues and obstacles between the company's desired identity and brand features;to indicate who should perform which tasks in the field of communication;to formulate and execute effective procedures in order to facilitate decision making about matters concerning communication; and to mobilise internal and external support behind corporate objectives.



9.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions

Q. 1. State any two objectives that PR practitioners need to achieve in an organisation as given by W.P. Ehling.

Q. 2. What do you mean by corporate communications?

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

Q. 1. State the difference between goals and objectives

Q. 2. State the difference between private and public sector

Q. 3. Is public relations same as corporate communications? Justify.

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

Q. 1. Explain the various objectives that public relations practitioners set to achieve.

Q. 2. Explain the different functions of a public relations specialist.

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