

Public Relations as Promotional Activity

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Abstract. *Public relations give opportunity to the organization to present its image and personality to its own “public”- users, supporters, sponsors, donors, local community and other public.*

It is about transferring the message to the public, but that is a two-way street. You must communicate with your public, but at the same time you must give opportunity to the public to communicate easier with you. The real public relations include dialog – you should listen to the others, to see things through their perspective. This elaborate is made with the purpose to be useful for every organization, not for the sensational promotion of its achievements, but to become more critical towards its work. Seeing the organization in the way that the other see it, you can become better and sure that you are giving to your users the best service possible.

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Introduction

Many authors consider the public relations as consistent part of the business policy, so they do not put them in promotional activities, but as a function closely related with the managing of the company. Nevertheless, the public relations, seen by the companies' point of view, where each individual is included in making and conducting of the company policy, should be considered significant promotional activity, coordinated with all elements of communication with the market, that is, with the public. Public relations represent significant element of every promotion. They are integral part of the whole promotional effort and they must be coordinated with the rest of the elements of the promotional mix. As separate part of the promotional mix, they have significant influence over the wider public, which consists not only of the buyers but also of the whole surrounding, all interested groups, the competition, the media and the state also.

For presentation of their messages public relations use channels of communication. In order not to be misunderstood, that in this way only the economic aspect is taken into consideration, the specific features of the companies should be emphasized, where the social and economic motives present a whole. In creating such communication directed toward the market and toward the public all promotional activities are included, subsequently the public relations, too. They all complement each other in creating a whole image for the market and for the public. In creating the messages by the public relations it is necessary to be familiar with the communication techniques, which is also important when creating the advertising material. In addition, the public relations can include some other promotional elements, using them in a different way and for different purpose of their usual. For example, economic advertising can be used to demonstrate the company's position considering some controversial issue; or special events can be organized to create good will in the community: publishing in the newspaper can be used to promote certain new product or some changes in the organization etc.

Public relations are present even when they are not organized as separate activity within the companies. They exist and the messages circulate in the public no matter whether the companies want that or not. Each company has its own personal representatives, sales personnel, workers, members of their families, creditors, former and present customers, suppliers etc. They all send messages for the company, good or bad, sometimes they are misinterpreted and sometimes they influence stronger than the advertising messages, which come from the advertising services or agencies. All these messages should be comprised and coordinated with the promotional activities. Rest of the

promotional activities help gain trust by the public, but because of the nature of their activity they can not have big influence.

For example, there is spreading of propaganda “mouth to mouth” misinformation about the work of the company in the public, to give bad, distorted image about the company or to be misinterpreted some company move. It is very difficult to react quickly in such cases if there isn't a department, within the promotional activities, who continuously follows all events in organized and planned manner.

Defining of the public relations

The term “Public Relations”, the same as the term “marketing” is taken from the English language and means whole strategic communication of the institutions with its social surrounding.

In this modern business world, the organizations with revolutionary products are very rear, with monopoly position on the market or privileged position in the society, which brings them success in the work by itself. The rest of the companies, if they want to succeed, should make friends, should influence the people, that is, they should be developing positive and effective relations with their public. The companies, financial institutions and all the rest that create products and who care about their survival and development in a competitive society should create two way relations, with high quality, with their public. They should build corporate personality. By this it is meant to build positive image, built associations and social acceptance. The PR campaign should come as a result of the company policy by itself, and should be coordinated with the rest of the promotional and marketing activities. The organizations should not be left to the case, but they should create their future continuously and consistently, and to build positive image in the public. Achieving of the wanted results with working, such as increasing of the profit, increasing of the market participation, the positive image, built preferred brand are goal of every organization. In order to realize its goals and for sustainable development, each company should establish communication with its public. Through speech it should be established two way communications with the public, by which the company will realize its goals, and the target group will be convinced that, with the received information, they know more or that they get bigger value. The target group (the public) should be constantly analyzed, to be understood, and according to their needs to make promotional campaign. The primary goal of the PR is to influence the opinion of the public. With creative choice of PR techniques it should create the public opinion and direct it in the positive direction in favour of the organization.

Good public relations

Good public relations rest on the well built strategy, with good timing, well planned and efficiently realized. Leading a campaign of Public Relations is complex matter. It requires good knowledge of the company, its separate activities, development possibilities, the problems it faces or it used to face, analysis of the competition, previous activities, everything in order more precise projecting and predicting of the future events. As a complex activity as it is the PR requires professional knowledge of the activity itself, but also social and psychological affinities that are necessary for better knowledge of the public in order to achieve better communication. Nevertheless, there isn't a manager with natural talent who can develop spontaneously and without preparation good and successful relations with the public. It takes a lot of time, thinking, attention and work. Public relations are managing process of the corporative reputation. Organization's personality demonstrated through its perception by the public and built associations represent critical factor for success or failure.

Better reputation – better market value

Built personality means built character, credibility in the public and uniqueness. Public relations have goal to build the company's image, which means to increase its immaterial assets. Good reputation means bigger market value, better development conditions and bigger acceptance. And of course, the things the company does should correspond with the things she is saying. An organization can have good and built image when:

- The company is seen as professional and good organized;
- The employees are satisfied and they see their future in the company;
- There are constant investments;
- Brands are built and good positioned, and the customer trust and use them.

When we talk about terms, there is a difference between the categories brand and product. The difference is in their perception and the degree of their perception. The difference is confirmed with the following opinion poll analysis, too. There are organizations which build their corporative reputation for years, and today they are synonyms for quality in their categories. For example, if you hear that the German car manufacturer BMW has decreased their safety standards in order to decrease their production expenses or that Mark & Spenser has lowered the quality of its products, would you believe in that? Surely not. Although we do not know the facts, we already have built perceptions for them. We all hear that Coca-Cola products are not healthy, but we consume them beside this fact, and we do not even think to give up of them.

Those are built brands with developed image and built preference considering their competition and the brand presents company's biggest capital. If we have the public opinion on our side we can do anything, without it absolutely nothing.

Defining of the target group (public)

The success of a company, bank or some other financial entity depends on their positive image in the public. Building of corporative identity, that is, certain associations and perceptions, is a process that should be well thought out.

Generally speaking all companies that have built image go through several phases:

- Defining of the public – the target group;
- Analysis of the current state:
 - a) Perception of the attitude toward our company;
 - b) Knowing of the competition;
- Determining of subject to be talked about;
- Defining of the goals of the campaign;
- Making a time-plan;
- Defining the necessary budget and necessary resources;
- Monitoring and evaluation of the effects of the campaign.

These are basic phases which should be considered, but public relations require bigger flexibility, spontaneity, quick reaction in certain situation, beside the necessary discipline, and also possibility of changing the plan if needed.

Bad image is hard to correct, and the good one should be maintained constantly. Here applies the rule that it is easier to spoil the image than to correct it.

Creating and maintaining good reputation and good image in the public is not an easy task. It requires complex engagement of the department for Public relations as well of the top management, and their constant coordination and cooperation. PR is an extraordinary way for realizing of promotional goals. Small expenses, high confidentiality, the possibility of targeting smaller public make the speech with the chosen target entity efficient and also credible way for influence.

Public relations provide way to project the image or the personality of an organization for its "public" – supporters, users, sponsors, donors, local community and other public. It is about transferring of a message to the public, but that is a two way process. We must communicate with our public, but we should also make conditions our public to communicate with us. The real Public Relations include dialog-we should listen to the others, to see things through their perspective.

Conclusions

Communication has become global, multi cultural, the world becomes global village in which everybody is communicating with everybody, and hence the need for good public relations i.e. for learning of the ways of quick communication without borders, but with the respect of the cultural differences. If we work in home company today, we are no longer part of our small isolated world, tomorrow we can have video-conference with for ex. French partners and we are going to need presentational skills. We must learn the principles of functional leading of a meeting, otherwise we will turn out ridiculous and inefficient. While in the ancient times oratorical skills were mostly applied in the political speeches, law and special occasions (presenting, toast, protocol), today they are used in all new modern global-informational ways of communicating as tools for achieving bigger success, confidentiality and finally for bigger profit.

Preparing the staff for responsible tasks has the same importance as following the next step in technology. Investing in human resources is the most payable factor for successful working of every organization, but only if all techniques for successful business communication are learned.

Modern business living goes in the direction of forming “a team of tomorrow” which consists of individuals who attract the vast masses with their magnetism, with their acquired communicability and charisma. The basic mechanisms for establishing good Public Relations are presented in this work. Further more, the contents draw the path which every successful businessman should follow, but also the paths on which the others go, and which he should know and respect.

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