



Part I: Evolution

Chapter One: Defining Public Relations



So what is public relations?

One definition to consider:

“Public relations is a planned process to influence public opinion, through sound character and proper performance, based on mutually satisfactory two-way communication.”



Another definition from Public Relations Society of America (PRSA):

“Public relations helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other. Public relations is an organization’s efforts to win the cooperation of groups of people.”



Marston’s four-step “RACE” model describes the PR process:

- R = Research attitudes about the issue at hand.
- A = Identify action of the client in the public interest.
- C = Communicate the action to gain understanding, acceptance, and support.
- E = Evaluate the communication to see if opinion has been influenced.



No matter how PR is defined, two elements guide the process

1. Management

To succeed, PR must report to top management, unimpeded by any other group.

2. Action

True PR cannot take place without ethical, consistent action. No amount of persuasion will cover up for poor performance.



Sharpe's five principles:

- The process of PR as Professor Melvin Sharpe has put it, "harmonizes long-term relationships among individuals and organizations in society." To "harmonize", Professor Sharpe applies five principles to the PR process:

1. Honest communication for credibility
2. Openness and consistency for confidence
3. Fairness of actions for reciprocity, goodwill
4. 2-way communication to build relationships
5. Research and evaluation to determine actions and adjust for social harmony



PR professionals serve as management interpreters

To publics, they interpret management's:

- Philosophies
- Policies
- Programs
- Practices

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And as public interpreters

To management, PR interprets the public's:

- Opinions
- Needs
- Desires



Management needs to know what the public thinks about the organization and its practices!

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The “publics” of public relations

- Practitioners must communicate with many different publics at once.
- Each public has its own special needs, media habits, and communication requirements.

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Ways to view our publics

- Publics can be classified into several overlapping categories:
 1. Internal or external
 2. Primary (can help or hinder the organization's efforts) or secondary (less important)
 3. Traditional (employees and current customers) and future (students and potential customers)
 4. Proponents (those supporting the organization), opponents, and the uncommitted

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Public relations, marketing, and advertising... aren't they all the same thing?

The answer is.....not really!

- Marketing and advertising traditionally promote products and services.
- Public relations promotes the entire organization.



Functions of Public Relations

They are numerous:

- Writing
- Media relations
- Planning
- Counseling
- Research
- Publicity
- Marketing Communications
- Community relations
- Consumer relations
- Employee relations
- Government affairs
- Investor relations
- Special publics relations
- Public affairs and issues management
- Web site development and interface



The curse of “spin”

- In its most benign (gentle) form, spin (turn, roll) signifies the distinctive interpretation of an issue or action to sway public opinion, as in putting a positive slant (take, attitude) on a negative story. In its most virulent (bitter, strong) form spin means confusing an issue or distorting (twist, change) or obfuscating (confusing) it or even lying.
- Spin cannot cover up for poor performance.
- Spin does NOT equal good public relations!
- ❖ Review Question:
 - Describe what public relations is.