



THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations is fundamentally the art and science of establishing relationships between an organization and its key audiences. Public relations plays a key role in helping business industries create strong relationships with customers.

Public relations involves supervising and assessing public attitudes, and maintaining mutual relations and understanding between an organization and its public. The function of public relations is to improve channels of communication and to institute new ways of setting up a two-way flow of information and understanding.

Public relations is effective in helping:

- * Corporations convey information about their products or services to potential customers
- * Corporations reach local government and legislators
- * Politicians attract votes and raise money, and craft their public image and legacy
- * Non-profit organizations, including schools, hospitals, social service agencies etc. boost support of their programs such as awareness programs, fund-raising programs, and to increase patronage of their services

Public relations in present times employs diverse techniques such as opinion polling and focus groups to evaluate public opinion, combined with a variety of high-tech techniques for distributing information on behalf of their clients, including the internet, satellite feeds, broadcast faxes, and database-driven phone banks.

As public image is important to all organizations and prominent personalities the role of public relations specialist becomes pertinent in crisis situations. Public relations agencies provide important and timely transmission of information that helps save the face of the organization. In the words of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), "Public relations helps an organization and its public adopt mutually to one another."

Experienced public relations agencies have formulation press releases into which they can plug the company news, as well as a targeted list of publications for their industry. Truly good public relations agencies generally have a good working relationship with key reporters, boosting their chances of getting coverage. Some public relations agencies deal only with large, established clients, while smaller boutique public relations agencies specialize in certain areas.

At present public relations as a career option exists in private companies or government institutions that actively market their product, service and facilities. Public relations training courses are widespread in educational institutions. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 122,000 public relations specialists in the United States in 1998 and approximately 485,000 advertising, marketing, and public relations managers working in all industries.

Most public relations practitioners are recruited from the ranks of journalism. Public relations officers are highly trained professionals with expertise and knowledge in many areas, for example shareholder management during a crisis, the evolving role of the in-house public relations professional, account management skills for public relations, an introduction to financial public relations, an introduction to consumer public relations, an introduction to public relations software etc.

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