

PR Today- Importance, Trends and Challenges

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Abstract

The 21st Century is the era of competition, mass awareness and information revolution. It is full of challenges and promises and is affecting all spheres of society, governments, educational institutions, industry and commerce, homes and citizens worldwide. It offers vast scope and opportunities to human beings to identify information, to evaluate information, and exchange information. It helps man to be more intelligent, informative, productive and competitive in the fast changing world. But at the same time, in an environment that bombards consumers with millions of (often conflicting) messages each day, credibility is suddenly the most valuable currency of all. And the management of this explosion of information with the credibility, accountability and transparency is a gargantuan task, which PR is performing today.

The annual Trust Barometer surveys conducted by international public relations firm Edelman continue to show that in major markets around the world, people increasingly find "Public Relations person" to be the most credible source of information: more credible by far than paid advertising and even earned media coverage. Thus, the PR industry has become an important actor in the present century and Press is serving as a major tool of PR. This article is an attempt to understand the impact, role and importance of PR.

Keywords: Importance and role of PR, challenges & changing trends, PR functions, PR mechanism getting significance

Introduction

Public relation (PR) is the practice of managing the flow of information between an organization and its public. Public relations gain an organization or individual exposure to their audiences using topics of public interest and news items that do not require direct payment. Because public relations place exposure in credible third-party outlets, it offers a third-party legitimacy that advertising does not have. Common activities include speaking at conferences, working with the press, and employee communication.

PR can be used to build rapport with employees, customers, investors, voters, or the general public. Almost any organization that has a stake in how it is portrayed in the public arena employs some level of public relations. A number of specialties exist within the field of public relations, such as Analyst Relations, media relations, investor relations or labour relations.

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) (1982) claimed: "Public relation helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other." According to the PRSA, the essential functions of public relations include research, planning, communications dialogue and evaluation.

Edward Louis Bernays, who is considered the founding father of modern public relations along with Ivy Lee, in the early 1900s defined public relations as a management function which tabulates public attitudes, defines the policies, procedures and interests of an organization. . . followed by executing a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance". Bernays, Edward, L. (1945).

A more recent definition from the Encyclopedia of PR says "Public Relations is a set of management, supervisory, and technical functions that foster an organization's ability to strategically listen to, appreciate, and respond to those persons whose mutually beneficial relationships with the organization are necessary if it is to achieve its missions and values." Essentially it is a management function that focuses on two-way communication and fostering of mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics.

It is the act of getting along with people we constantly come in touch with. PROs ensures internal cohesion in the company by maintaining a clear communications network between the management and employees. Its first objective is to improve channels of communication and to establish new ways of setting up a two-way flow of information and understanding.

PR is essentially an exercise in developing mutual understanding, inculcating appreciation of each other's role in assuring the overall efficiency of an organization, the basic objective of this activity is to win friends and influence people in every possible, healthy and amiable style. Therefore, the role of PR and its practitioners in dissemination of the requisite information at the requisite time in a dignified, graceful manner through all acceptable channels, nationally and globally, has started assuming extreme vital dimensions. To translate all the programmes, policies, problems and imbroglios in a language common people can comprehend, digest and imbibe is an important function which PR practitioners are performing.

Thus, PR is serving as the most significant medium to establish relations with the public, disseminating information among people and taking feedback from the people regarding anything, service, product or person.

Evolution and Role

Public Relation is as old as human civilisation. It has existed in one form or the other. There are umpteen examples of its varied form, content and end use. An ancient clay tablet, found in Iraq, told the Sumerian farmers how to grow better crops. That was over 4000 years ago. The Arabian tales relate how the celebrated Sultan Haroon-Al-Rashid used to wander about every night in disguise to see for himself as to what the people really felt about his administration. In the *Ramayana* there is a character called Bhadro who used to report to Rama about popular feelings and perceptions. Employing professional bards to sing the glory of the king was an ancient custom in India. Much of what is known today about the exploits of the kings and ancient civilizations is the result of scribes seeking to glorify the achievements of a royal patron. The *Rajtarangini* of Kalhana also belongs to the same genre.

The great religious teachers from Gautama Buddha and Sankaracharya to Nanak and Kabir were master communicators. They preached, in an idiom which the common people found easy to understand. The rock inscriptions of emperor Ashok were written in local dialects for easy communication. He also sent his own children to Sri Lanka to spread the message of Buddhism. From this angle, his daughter, Sanghamitra can be described as the first woman public relations executive in history.

Centuries of slavery beginning with the Mughal rule followed by the Englishmen brought in its wake a new type of Public Relations on the part of the rulers as also those spearheading the movement for Independence. The rulers tried to put forth that they were working for the people of this country and that people should cooperate in their continuance. Besides adopting various administrative and political policies, they launched communication strategies.

William Augustus Hickey brought out the first newspaper in India in 1780, for catering to the interests of the European settlers in Calcutta. It was in no way a mirror of the nation in making. Newspapers soon became a means of educating and enlightening the people. They also highlighted various socially-important issues, acting in the process as a catalyst for the growth of public opinion.

In the present century the outstanding example of a master communicator is that of Mahatma Gandhi. On 9th August 1942, he gave a call to the British rulers to quit India. This resulted in hundreds of thousands of citizens coming out for their exit once and for all. Within five years, i.e., 15th August, 1947, centuries of slavery ended and India became independent.

A systematic and organised practice of public relations in India began with the Indian Railways. The Great Indian Peninsular (GIP) Railways, for example, carried on a campaign in England in the 20s to attract tourists to India. Within the country, its Publicity Bureau introduced a travelling cinema which held open air shows at fairs, festivals and other places. This Bureau also undertook extensive advertising in newspapers and journals besides participating in exhibitions abroad to popularise the Indian Railways and tourist traffic.

During the First World War (1914-1918), the Government of India set up a Central Publicity Board. This was the first organised PR/Information set-up of the Government of India. It was renamed as Central Bureau of Information, afterwards renamed as Bureau of Public Information, and functioned as a link between the Government and the Press. One of the items on its agenda was to find out where the action of the Government was criticised. In today's parlance, we call it "feedback". For the first time, an Indian, namely, J. Natarajan of *The Pioneer*, Lucknow, was appointed as its Deputy Principal Information Officer.

As of now, the functions of publicity and public relations and of broadcasting, television, advertising, films, publications etc. are looked after by professionals. After Independence (1947), the Government of India set up a full-fledged Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. This was a revolutionary measure in the reorganization of the information and public relations setup of the Central Government. All the State Governments and Union Territories also have Departments of Information and Public Relations.

In a developing country like India, communication of Government programmes, achievements and expectations are, no doubt, important. But equally important is communication from and to the economic sector - public sector, NGOs, public utilities, academic bodies, etc. - seeking to inform, motivate, change the mind set and finally seek public support for achieving the objectives of these organisations.

After Independence, multinational companies operating in India for several years felt the need to communicate with the Indian people more meaningfully. In order to adjust their corporate policies to the democratic milieu, these companies increasingly turned to public relations. Among the Indian giants, the Tatas had already set up a Public Relations Department in Mumbai in 1943 headed by Shri Minoo Masani. The public sector has, however, made a significant contribution to the birth, nurturing, growth and professionalism in public relations. Public relations in its true sense started with PSUs like HMT, BHEL, Bhilai Steel Plant, followed by NTPC, Indian Oil, VSNL, NHPC, ONGC— to name a few. Bodies like Public Sector Public Relations Forum and SCOPE have played a notable role in professionalization of PR discipline.

At the apex level, there is Public Relations Society of India (PRSI) set up in 1958. It is the national association for professional development of Public Relations practitioners and communication specialists. It seeks to promote Public Relations as an integral function of the management. As of now, it operates through 24 Regional Chapters throughout the country with a membership exceeding 3000.

Public relations as a separate career option has come into existence when lots of private or government companies and institution felt the need to market their product, service and facilities. Public image is important to all organisations and prominent personalities. The role of public relation specialist becomes pertinent in crisis situations when the correct and timely transmission of information can help save the face of the organisation.

In terms of career opportunities, public relations is broadly practiced for product publicity, corporate publicity, to have better relations with the government, to publish corporate publications like newsletter, bulletins, magazines for employees etc. Building and managing relationships with those who influence an organization or individual's important audiences has a central role in doing public relations.

There are, however, certain areas where PR has yet to make a full dent. These include strengthening programmes for training in this field, publication of literature on PR by seasoned practitioners and academics, case studies on PR situations in Indian companies, equipping PR departments with professionally-trained personnel as well as latest communication equipment falling in the category of Information Technology and, above all, continuous trust and support by the management. All these are important for enabling the PR personnel to perform their role effectively, particularly in the present and future marked by fierce competition both nationally and internationally.

Nature and Process of Public Relations

Public relations as a process serve a number of functions. While the definitions may vary, the nature of Public Relations indicates that it is essentially a task promoting rapport and goodwill between a person, firm or institution and the community at large through dissemination of information. It seeks to earn support, mobilise or solicit favour for an idea, a cause, a problem, for an institution or an individual. It uses a two-way communication in dealing with public opinion. First, it assesses the attitudes of the public towards the organisation. Next, it executes communication programmes to gain public understanding and acceptance of the management's point of view. Public Relations aim to bring about harmonious and mutually advantageous adjustment between an organisation and the community through dissemination of ideas and also by providing feedback from the public to the management. It also evaluates public attitudes, identifies policies that interests public and executes the programme of communication.

Aggarwal, Vir Bala, Gupta, V.S., (2001) Good public relations implies a sound moral base i.e, communication must be sincere and based on facts. Harmless conduct is not enough. Action is required to gain favorable recognition. This may be expressed as striving for three objectives: "To attract attention, to win belief, and to impart understanding".

These steps are taken to reach a goal, to convince people that they should adopt a certain attitude or pursue a certain course of action. Without knowing what, whom, how, and why a public relations programme can serve no purpose. A purposeful public relations programme should understand the organization's nature and purpose thoroughly, communicate this understanding to others, i.e., the publics and finally observe and evaluate the effect of the communication.

As a consequence of public relations activity on this sound base, management can gain the opportunity, to make such internal changes in the organization, product, service, or method as will enable it to survive and prosper in a public climate of goodwill.

Scope of Public Relations

Public relations consist of a number of little things and a few big things. It is the daily application of common sense, common courtesy, and common decency. It is doing a lot of favours to others, so that they will be inclined to do favours to you. It can be just entertaining a visitor to your organisation, or it can be as important as providing counsel and advice that leads management to solve a crucial strike situation. It can be organizing a health camp for the children of the employees of your organisation or it could be the formulation of a communication campaign to face the society at large, as in the case of Union Carbide's Bhopal gas tragedy. Public Relation is a multitude of things.

Public relation is actually the dissemination of facts, ideas about individuals and institutions for various purposes, such as to attract attention, gain prestige, publicize products, or to satisfy public interest in an institution or of an individual. Public relation's scope extends to policy and strategy and counseling management.

Public relation includes Creating publicity for the organisation, its product and services, Employee publications like a house journal, General body meeting reports, Preparation of booklets, pamphlets etc, Advertising , Community work, Corporate donation, Public speaking, Radio and TV programmes, Direct mail, Arranging for exhibitions, Tours, Open houses , Training employees in customer relations, Answering queries from media and public, issuing of press releases, Making films, documentaries and video, Company policy formulation, Interacting with legislators and government, Company correspondence, Personal calls, Sales training , Promotion , Attending and arranging of special events, parties etc.

The broad variety and scope of PR functions range from doing small favours for people, visible in a social gathering to devising a broader strategy to gain public favour.

Benefits of public relation

Public Relations can be called as Power Tool for The 21st Century. Kelly, Robert, A. The primary benefits derived from public relations are:

- i. Public relation is a means for the public to have its desires and interests felt by the institutions in our society. It interprets and speaks for the public to otherwise unresponsive organisations. It also speaks on behalf of those organisations to the public to help create public acceptance and recognition
- ii. It helps promotion of a company's goods or services and builds up 'image'
- iii. PR is a means achieve mutual adjustment between institutions and groups, establishing smoother relationships that benefit the public.
- iv. It can help to attract talented personnel for the organisation.
- v. PR personnel can help activate the organisation's social conscience and thus foster the goodwill of community.
- vi. It can help overcome public misconception about the organisation by disseminating correct information.
- vii. It can help earn the good will of employees by showing interest in their welfare. Thus it may prevent labour problems and solve any disputes with greater ease.

The Industry Today

The current decade is a period that will spell change for the Public Relations profession, and this is now being witnessed in India. It is no longer just the sweet-talking 'spin doctors' who can achieve results. Investors are getting smarter and more sophisticated. They need a new breed of professionals to tackle their needs. Thus is born the 'Investor Relations' professional. PR is evolving to a new level. The next decade is going to call for PR to redefine its path and roles within organisations.

Till date, PR professionals were more of 'technicians' who were concerned with the job of communication. The new role will call for a 'strategist' who can think business. The move will gradually be towards more strategic thinking, rather

than technical issues like what to say and how to say. "The role of a PR person has become more strategic," One has to be adaptable. And it's not about just taking orders from our employers; we educate our employers on what's happening outside and come up with solutions."

The role of research and counsel has become more important. "Journalists rely on PR people to feed them correct information because they sometimes do not do their research. Research therefore is an important part of PR."

Modern public relations uses a variety of techniques including 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 satellite feeds, the Internet, broadcast faxes, and database-driven phone banks to recruit supporters for a client's cause.

"Knowledge is power", this maxim suits to the PR profession of present times in true sense as today the role of PR person has changed. He is no more considered as a magician who can influence people by his magic wand or sweet charming words or by sheer flattering rather he is an intelligent and gentle man who is fully equipped with the knowledge and mesmerizes people by his wit and store house of knowledge.

According to the PRSA, examples of the knowledge that may be required in the professional practice of public relations include communication arts, psychology, social psychology, sociology, political science, economics, and the principles of management and ethics. Technical knowledge and skills are required for opinion research, public issues analysis, media relations, direct mail, institutional advertising, publications, film/video productions, special events, speeches, and presentations.

Although public relations professionals are stereotypically seen as corporate servants, the reality is that almost any organization that has a stake in how it is portrayed in the public arena employs at least one PR manager. Large organizations may even have dedicated communications departments. Government agencies, trade associations, and other non-profit organizations commonly carry out PR activities.

Changing trends in Public Relations

Increasing scope/ Increasing Trend of a Specialist: In India, we are already witnessing the trend of specialization within PR. The role of a specialist, today, encompasses issue management, public affairs, investor relations, employee communication and event management. We have also witnessed advertising agencies spin off a PR arm and offer single point 'Full Service'. As the scope increases, PR departments are bound to increase in size. Activities such as 'websites', 'annual reports', 'employee newsletters' will move on to the specialist.

A number of specialists exist within the field of public relations, including crisis management, reputation management, issue management, investor relations, labour relations, grassroot PR, property development PR, real estate PR, retail sector PR, food service PR, health care PR, technology/IT PR, public affairs PR,

on-line PR, financial/investor relations, employee/member communications, community PR, not-for-profit PR, crisis communication PR etc.

Impact of technology: The advents of company-wide intranets and e-mail have already impacted internal communications within any organization. It is easy for information to get out into the wired world as news spreads in a matter of nanoseconds. The technology also offers positive benefits: it is not uncommon to see organizations today conduct live Web conferences and Web chats with investors globally. This helps to build the transparency factor as every investor can participate and know what is happening in real-time. Corporate websites are also a tool for addressing and understanding customer and investor grievances.

Advent of Social Media: Advertising dollars in media products from corporations like News Corp., Dow Jones, and CMP are under rapid decline in favor of direct advertising products offered by search engines and other tools. Traditional media publications have been laying off many journalists, consolidating beat reporters, shrinking their print editions, and many publications are shutting down entirely.

Blogs have lower over-head costs than traditional media and are often said to provide better news coverage and analysis. Blogs are increasingly sprouting to replace traditional media with a more sustainable low-cost business model and are gaining more of a following. The advent of social media is the most pre-eminent trend in PR today. Social media releases, search engine optimization, content publishing, and the introduction of podcasts and video are other burgeoning trends.

Beyond Boundaries: There is so much impact of globalization on PR industry. PR professionals will have to move beyond boundaries to integrate with the global marketplace and understand global cultures. Sensitivity to each culture is important. The media operates differently in different markets. Though Internet and other means of communication have converted the entire world into a global village and PR persons can reach corners that were in the past unreachable, but still they need to cope with the emerging demands and expansion.

Social and Environmental concerns: People are not interested in superficial measures adopted by organisations. It will be an accepted norm that as corporate citizens, organisations will have concern for the environment and the society in which they operate. People are not going to tolerate companies violating the environment and social values. The organisations that do not keep this in mind will have to face dire consequences. Social Issues like AIDS have not yet been openly discussed within corporates; very few have a policy to deal with this critical social issue. The IT industry that has spread out globally will have to factor in such sensitive issues.

Transparency and ethics: Investors are increasingly demanding transparency. It is not only about a 'nice image'; it is about the 'real image'. And as times progresses, laws will make it compulsory to bare all. Gone are the days of 'spin doctors' who could weave stories and sweet-talk; transparency and ethics will be much-used words. In this area, it is the Indian IT industry that has created benchmarks and led the way.

Challenges being faced by PR industry

As modern PR evolves we have challenging times ahead, it is time for re-inventing the industry. PR is not just acting 'smart' arranging or attending cocktails, remaining in attendance on the boss and even the madam, cultivating media persons, managing to get adverse stories 'killed' and getting favourable headlines and stories in the media. It is in fact, a very serious, painstaking, challenging and rewarding job. He gets both bouquets and brickbats. But, then, he has to meet the challenge for his own survival and advancement. Sardana, C.K., (1995)

The public relations practitioners have gone through periods of trials and tribulations in the last few decades. They now have to face newer challenges. The patronage and status they enjoyed in a protected economy, where they had the status of extended limb of the government, will no longer be there. The print or the electronic media are not going to give them any special treatment. Their professional abilities will be put to test.

Modern means of communication have shrunk the globe and performance of our economy and undertakings will be watched closely by the world. The media scene too has changed. Newspapers no longer enjoy the near monopoly they did till a few years ago. The audio visual media is playing a big role in moulding the minds of the people. In this environment, only those who are capable of competing will survive. Others will just get washed away.

What are the challenges in the field of public relations posed by the new millennium? Shameen Abdul Jalil, president of Institute of Public Relations Malaysia (IPRM), (2003, May) talked about how the functions of a PR person has expanded. "It's not about dressing well, smiling and looking good. It isn't. The challenge lies in what you have in your head," "PR is about our thinking processes and what we are able to deliver. It's about image-building, dealing with issues management. The role is about reducing conflicts. The challenge is in maintaining it as a management role". Below are some other challenges faced by the PR industry:

Media Relations and Credibility: Another challenge of public relations is dealing with the media. "It's not just about sending out press releases. It demands networking with the media and we must know the people running the newspapers. We must know how to network with them, how to manage our relationship with the press.

Issues of identity, ethics and competence are undermining PR's reputation. As far back as 1992, in *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*, edited by James Grunig, IABC (International Association of Business Communicators) identified a lack of respect for the PR profession as a critical challenge, particularly in view of the climate of distrust in which practitioners were operating. As long as we ignore these issues, PR persons' credibility will be in jeopardy. Despite its strategic management function, PR continues to be perceived as simply publicity.

At the same time, members of the news media, no matter how hungry they are for stories, remain justifiably skeptical of the newsworthiness of leads coming from our offices. Indeed, they rarely view PR practitioners as equal partners in public information, and hostility between the professions is common.

Expansion of Information Technology: PR in the new millennium is about staying ahead of technology to be effective. Before it was about tackling the educated and the opinionated, now it's very complex – because of the Internet, everyone has a say. PR is evolving because of the Net. People are more knowledgeable. PR is a field that is entwined with the community, so we must be in the know.

The survival and success of an organization in the present-day world largely depends upon the effective management of Information Technology, which is poised to revolutionize all aspects of social development through new thresholds in human connectivity. How has the advent of the Internet changed the rules of the game?

The role of Information Technology has expanded in all sectors of human development and the Public Relations can play a pivotal role by creating greater awareness among the people, by generating opportunities for the people to understand the latest technologies and developments so that they can disseminate information among people quickly and effectively. In the I.T. world, the question arises as what public relations can do for the welfare of the public. By public relations people's participation is possible. People's active participation will lead to development.

The "expectation setting" Challenge in PR: It's not an unreasonable demand to expect great media coverage. It's simply unreasonable to make that demand without truly listening to your PR counsel's expert advice on how to make it happen. Great media coverage requires careful planning. It requires spadework in the form of dozens of pitches customized for individual reporters and bloggers, and a careful logistical dance in setting up appointments. You can't dump a press release on your PR agency a day or two before it's scheduled to go live, and also expect them to shoot the moon. Call this whining if you want: it's an age-old complaint in the PR game.

Misconceptions/Myths: So many myths have been attached to PR profession and professionals. PR means different things to different people. To some, a PRO is a lucky guy who is well dressed, talk slang, is a frequent invitee to cocktails, dinners, past master in the art of wangling etc. Another myth about PR person is that he has the knack of pleasing people, clever enough to get only a rosy picture of the organization published in the media and available for carrying and holding the brief case of the boss. He is considered as an expert in satisfying whims and fancies of the madam.

Yet another misconception is that PR is also supposed to wield a magic wand for getting an adverse story killed. He is expected to be a fixer and liaison man for obtaining intelligence well in advance. In other words, he is expected to sneak around the corridors of power and find out what is 'cooking'.

There are umpteen instances where people have been brought into PR on the basis of the myths only, the glamour and expertise in cultivating people has also brought them dividends by way of fast promotion and other favours but quick return to their original discipline leaving the PR where it was. The reality of the PR is altogether different. PR is a very serious, painstaking and committed job which can best be handled by professionally qualified and trained person who should have capability to fight with these myths and establish his position as a friend, philosopher and guide for the management.

The New Rules for Public Relations “Changing strategies for challenging times”

Positioning a company as a market leader and measurably increasing media visibility is what successful PR is all about in the challenging times of economic downturn and unstable economy. A strategic public relations campaign can strengthen a company's position and competitive edge during a weak economy.

Among the most effective public relations practices used by successful companies is thought leadership. Thought leadership is the art of communicating a strategic vision to others in an informative and convincing way. Masters of thought leadership will not speak above or below their audience, but directly to them. Understanding their public enables thought leaders to position themselves as experts in their given field while crafting their message in a way that influences their audience in a positive manner.

According to Miller, J, Blake “Today, the PR industry is under more scrutiny than ever before. The days of building a company on hype and rumor are long gone.” In any economy, smart companies scrutinize their budgets. Regardless of the price paid, executives seek quality and return on investment. This puts the PR industry under pressure to show value for every hour worked and every dollar spent.

Tactical public relations should be quick, flexible, and cost effective. Competitive and economic environments can change rapidly and lightening fast response to these changing environments is crucial to the success of any PR campaign. Long-term programs planned a year in advance with exorbitant budgets are a thing of the past. Pretending to know what will happen over the next 12 to 14 months is an unaffordable luxury. By switching gears and returning to basics, public relations can be part reconnaissance and part sales support.

Conclusion

Once upon a time the ancient Greek philosopher discovered the principle of buoyancy while relaxing in a bathtub, and then what did he do? He shouted “Eureka, Eureka”, and ran into the street, without even dressing up enthusiastically. Why? It was because of the overwhelming desire to share his new knowledge with the world.

However, Archimedes, due to the lack of proper communication channel, language and method, was murdered in front of all by the Roman commander. This case is not solitary but many other great scientists met the same end with lifetime imprisonment/death against their great inventions and discoveries.

By quoting this example I want to explain that without proper communication channel, language and method no invention or discovery is new, great and beneficial for the public.

Here Public Relation is required because by applying proper communication strategies and process, PR helps in the dissemination of every kind of message and seeks to earn people understanding and support towards it.

This article discusses the importance and role of PR, especially in a democratic system, where everyone has a right to express himself but at the same time he/she needs a proper communication strategy, channel or process, so that he can make people understand in a systematic manner and a desired message can be conveyed.

We can say that in the present context, success springs from the fundamental premise of public relations which believes that people act on their own perception of the facts, and those perceptions lead to behaviors about which something can be done. When public relations creates, changes or reinforces that opinion by reaching, persuading and moving-to-desired-action those people whose behaviors affect the organization, the public relations effort is a success.

The article has made an attempt to discover and communicate the kaleidoscopic facets of Public Relations so that the profession could be understood in real terms. The article concludes that The PR industry has become an important actor in society and in the democratic process. However public relations is associated with publicity, media relations, and the attempt of an organization to advance its own agenda but still people view public relations as an important activity that benefits society by providing information and disagree that it is damage control, an attempt to hide or disguise something, or a non-substantive activity. It also dispels the notion that public relations is not advertising and publicity dressed up attractively to woo the public for personal gain and that public relation persons are 'conmen' contact men and go-betweens.

Today the essentiality of this function is seldom questioned in a time when the world suffers from conflicts in which confrontations all too often displace communication. As society continues to become more massive, more impersonal, more segmented, the need for public relations grows. The practitioners, individually and collectively, have made progress in improving their competence and in raising the ethical level of their work.

Despite so many misconceptions about PR, today the demand and need for professional public relations services is increasing at a great pace. Its function has become better understood and more fully accepted over the years both by management and the public. Hence, its professionals have acquired greater responsibility, respectability and accountability in all spheres. The recent developments and current communications revolution will advance public relations to an extent unrealized today.

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