

# Models of professionalism in the pr industry



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Professionalism is an attempt to translate one order of scarce resources, specialist knowledge and skills into social and economic rewards (Larson, 1977). It is describes as a sphere of expertise and identifying level of practice and competencies among Public Relations practitioners which has been developed for over hundreds years ago in our society. Different Public Relations (PR) associations shall practice different forms of code ethics. For example most of PR associations adopted Code of Athens while others have their own code of ethics as guidelines. In accordance to Brown (1986), he defined ethics as a set of values that establishes the criteria by which conduct will be judged. Ethics also are culture-bound and therefore create some difficulties for global public relations practice. Thus, Code of Ethics is a formal statement of an organisation's values on certain ethical and social issues.

The famous four models that influence the contemporary public relation theories of practice were adapted from Grunig and Hunt's (1984). They comprised of Public agency /publicity that was used to draw attention to an event. A two-way asymmetric will deal with the feedback from the public by providing persuasive communication. Whereas a two way symmetric is mutual understandings between the public and organisation that was built through dialogue, listening and understanding. Other theories discussed are the systems theory that helped to explain and predict organisation behaviours and contribution of PR role to the entity as whole. A situational theory is a tools to categorise publics perceptions of a situation and their subsequent behaviour; and agenda setting theory discussed about the media

and the way news is selected by media outlets for consumption by the public (Sheehan & Xavier 2009).

PR practitioner are demanded to be ethical as they go professional.

According to Seithel (1997), PR practitioner must be honest and trustworthy to cater the needs of the public and individual organisation in order to protect those who entrust their well being to the professional (try to rephrase the sentence- vague). They also need to protect their profession values and commit themselves to uphold the profession by honouring its obligation and values. In order to quantify professionalism, PR practitioner should demonstrate their skills on handling special tasks. Professionalism are divided into three categories. First, it is an act to serve the best interest of client and public, ' Utility of vagueness' (Kultgen, 1988) which contributes to the ideological use of functionalist models in the struggle for status. Secondly, it acts as an ' ideology of advocacy' (Simon, 1978) where professional is neutral and detached from the client's purposes and also create an aggressive partisan of the client working to advance the client's needs. Finally, they denote a right that the public possesses by virtue of being the primary, generic unit in society. It is also denotes a benefit(s) from public's relationship with other units to insure the well-being of society as a whole.(nda ku paham) However as Bayles (1981) states not all responsibilities are those of individual professionals. Some are responsibilities of a profession as a whole and cannot be reduced to obligations of individual professionals.

The use of professionalism normally linked in PR field with the expression of the need to improve occupational standing- body of knowledge, ethics and

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certification to understand the defining characteristics of profession (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1994, pp. 129-163; Grunig & Hunt, 1984, pp. 66-69; Wylie, 1994). This is to improve the effectiveness of public relations as well as their image of presentation. But how? Any examples

For example, Institute of Public Relation in Malaysia does not belong to individual professional Public Relations practitioner but it's portals who desire the systematic, organized growth and development of Public Relations as a profession, who contribute positively to the nation's continuous growth and development in all spheres of human endeavours. This was subjected due to the different culture backgrounds and races in Malaysia. The main objective of Institute of Public Relation in Malaysia is to enhance professionalisms among public relations practitioners in Malaysia. To be more specific, the objectives of Institute of Public Relation in Malaysia are:-

1. Supports research and other educational activities in public relations.
2. Giving advice and provide information and create opportunities for discussions on all aspects of public relation activities.
3. To promote the understanding, development and recognition of public relations.
4. To established and prescribe standards of professional and ethical conduct and ensure the observance of those standards.
5. To encourage the attainment of professional academic qualification.
6. To nurture, promote and maintain contacts with public relation practitioners.

The Institute of Public Relation in Malaysia (IPRM) has its own code of ethics to manage the practice of Public Relations in Malaysia. Public Relations practitioners in Malaysia are governed in two ways, firstly by the Code of Professional Conduct (Code of Athens) which was enforced by the institute of Public Relations Malaysia. Any

negligence they can be fined and deregistered. Secondly, it is governed by the law of the country where Public Relations practitioner can be sued or imprisoned for any offences committed under the law of the country such as Printing Presses and Publication Act 1984, Seditious Act 1948, Defamation Act 1957, Copyright Act 1987 and Internal Security act 1960, revised in 1972.

Institute of Public Relation in Malaysia Code of Ethics was adapted from the Code of Athens where all members should:-

1. Conduct professional activities with respect for the public interest
2. Shall at all time deal fairly and honestly with his client or employers, past and present, with fellow members and with the general public
3. Shall not intentionally disseminate false or misleading information; maintain truth, accuracy and good taste.
4. Shall not engage in any practices which tend to corrupt the integrity of channels of public communication.
5. Shall not create or use of any organisation purporting to serve some announced cause but actually promoting a special private interest of a member or his client or his employer which is not apparent
6. Shall safeguards the confidence of both present and formers clients and employers. Shall not disclose confidential information.
7. Shall not represent conflicting or competing interest
8. Shall not accept fees, commission or any other valuable consideration from anyone either than his client or employer.
9. Shall not attract business unfairly
10. Shall not purpose to prospective client or employer that his fee or other compensation to be contingent on the achievement of certain result.
11. Shall not intentionally injure the profession reputation or practice of another member
12. Shall not engaged in or be connected with any occupation or business which is not consistent with

membership of the institute. 13. Shall not seek to supplant another member with his/her employer or client, no shall he/she encroach upon the professional employment of another member unless both parties are assured that there is no conflict of interest involved. 14. Shall cooperate with fellow members in upholding and enforcing the code.

In Malaysia, system theory of public relations and strategy strengthen the concepts of public relations management in Malaysia. System theory (general system theory) is widely being applied to the field of public relation in order to explain and predict the organisational behaviours and explain how the public relations role contributes to the entity as a whole (Sheehan and Xavier, 2009). With the application of system theory, professional can play their adaptive roles in shaping the standards of professionalism based on the concept of adjustment and adaptation of public relations. It is important in creating transparency of the organisations to their environment. 'Professional' public relations practitioners should be able to respond to the dynamic real world, especially in competitive business environment (Cutlip et al., 2000; Cornelissen, 2004: 167) For example, case study done by Zulhamri Abdullah and Therry Threadgold:

Waste Management Company, CEO's stated that " Unlike multinational companies which are taking a great concern over public relations as they have gone up and down, but some Malaysian companies have not really exposed to high competition and being having good at all time. Malaysian CEOs must be more agile and competitive. Communication is very important for a company to be appeared as the best company. This can be done by communicating and engaging your business with external stakeholders.

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That's why we invest in PR to be seen by our stakeholders. A real PR practitioner must be able to influence a CEO's thinking and judgement. Here, PR is a part of top management committee".

This statement shows the importance of the role of PR in the company and how the CEO's trust the PR ideas and judgement towards decision-making. Good communication skills will help the PR to exploit the business deals with internal and external stakeholders. In order to realise this vision, the development of PR knowledge is important towards the professionalism in the field. For nurturing real professionals and improve level of competencies among PR fraternity, it will take a long process. A lack of talent, skills and competency among PR practitioners are the most critical issues faced by the organisations/sectors. Accreditation is an important requirement in professionalization of PR practice which is based on voluntary rather than an imposed mandatory system. It should be more focus on providing technical and managerial knowledge and skills which is more complex and sophisticated.

Social responsibility was the aim of IPRM and other PR Institute, in order to proof occupation's value to the society by giving or putting facts which can be supported by the truth. Organisation in democratic societies exists with consent of the public so it is a must for the organisation to be socially responsible. There are some advantages and disadvantages of socially responsible PR. The advantages are by helping them to improve their professional practice through codifying and enforcing ethical conduct and standards of performance, stressing the need of the public. Also they serves the public interest by discussing the view articulate in the forum and to

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promote human welfare by helping social system to adapt the changing needs and environments.

Whereas as a drawback, PR gains advantages for and promote special interest, sometimes at the cost of the public well being, strangled the channels of communication that confuses, and also corrodes the channel of communication with the cynicism and credibility gap.

As conclusions, in order to be professional Public Relations practitioner, he/she must abide the code of ethics which have been provided by their organisations. They also should be trustworthy in handling specific task in order to gain trust from clients and the public itself. The level of skills to be professional will be judged through their expertise on handling the tasks given. ( dang ur conclusion... not good enuf lah... write more..... kalo boleh support with any statement)

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