

Free report about public relations in action

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Introduction

Public relations and what it encompasses is probably one of the largest unsolved yet not so popular issues in the field of media and reporting. It is important to take note at this point that although directly correlated, public relations and mass media are not the same. Mass media is the use of different methods and technologies to disseminate information or basically anything that may either pertain to the truth or what the people or the masses would want to know. Public on the other hand, while it certainly uses the power of media to communicate and manage relationships, has a different and actually a broader meaning. While mass media is concerned with the mere process of disseminating information, public relation is concerned with the process of managing the process of disseminating information. So in a sense, it is always a step ahead or a degree higher than mass media because in almost any public relation scenario, mass media would only appear as a primary tool that public relations offices use to fulfill their duties. The objective of this paper are to overview what public relation is, what public relations can do for organizations in general, what public relations can do in general for organizations within the specific practice sector or sectors of relevance to the chosen organization, show how public relations can specifically support the chosen organization from the options provided. The organization chosen for public relations project is “ Powering Queensland.”

Public Relations

There can be many definitions that an organization or entity can use to describe public relations. This may be due to the fact that public relation-related processes can be applicable to not just a single industry but to a variety of it. For example, the definition that public relation officers of political parties may be different from the definition that public relation officers of a for profit company use. The PRSA or the Public Relations Society of America (1982) stated that “ public relations helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other” . The said organization later on released an updated definition of public relations. The updated definition is a crowd-sourced one, meaning the definition represents that opinion of the general public about how public relations should be defined, suggests that “ public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics” . What we can gather based on the two varying definitions of public relations provided by a single organization is that public relations is a continuously evolving field. It has never been stagnant. In fact, according to some sociology experts, public relations is a field that is practically as old as society . Some of the best examples of the suspected use of public relations during the old world include the audience segmentation strategies used in writing the gospels, conducting political promotions in the Roman civilization, and the logos and other forms of visual designs used by ancient and middle age craftsmen to help the public identify who they were and perhaps, even their intentions. However, the issue about when the use of public relations and other mediums of stakeholder relationship management really started

remains to be one of the biggest and hottest issues in public relations today. What is important to take note of this aspect of the discussion though is that public relations has roots that are deeper than what is commonly perceived because its use actually started some time during the era of some of the oldest human civilizations .

The use of public relations during the discovery of the New World has been documented and according to historical recounts, public relation promotions, often exaggerated, were used to lure people into settling into the newly discovered habitable settlements and to gather funds for the relocation of the new settlers and building the necessary infrastructures and utilities to make such settlements inhabitable.

Despite the issues and controversies surrounding the early use of public relation strategies, it is quite established that the modern era of public relations started in the 20th century when public relations blossomed as a profitable industry and a paid profession . It was also during this time when some of the first and oldest public relations agencies were established. Some of the oldest public relations agencies, if not the oldest, was the Publicity Bureau, which was founded by Edward Bernays and Ivy Lee—two of the most significant figures in the field of public relations and communications . The development of public relations as a paid profession was later on realized as one aspect of the explosive growth that it experienced throughout the entire 20th century. As more advanced printing materials, computers, internet technologies, and social media became mainstream, public relations became a very volatile field, characterized by a series of ups followed by a series of downs in an unpredictable manner. In the end, what was achieved is a higher

level of professionalism and profitability in the field of public relations, which is actually something good as these two things are what fueled the public relations industry to grow and develop into something that it is today.

Just like any other fields of science, public relations has branched into several disciplines. Gone are the days when the term “ public relations” was used to pertain to the same thing.

- Government Public Relations

- As the name implies, this discipline is concerned with everything that is related to the management of government departments. Policy retention, and or changes, is usually the target goal of public relation officers working in this discipline.

- Financial Public Relations

- Money and market management are some of the basic aspects being addressed by financial public relation officers. Most of the time, they are also usually tasked to broadcast the financial results and performance of a particular organization to the stakeholders. Regardless of the positivity or the negativity of the financial performance, the broadcasting is usually followed by the declaration of the organization’s business strategy for the upcoming fiscal year to counter the negatives or if not, to retain and even improve the positives.

- Consumer and Lifestyle Public Relations

- Consumer and lifestyle public relations is, as the name implies, the branch of public relations concerned with doing product reviews and relaying the result of such reviews to the public for reference purposes.

Much has been changed with the way how public relation agencies do their

thing now. If before, the mainstream method of disseminating information to the public, for the interest of a for profit organization for example, is through printing pamphlets that contain slogans, today it is usually going to be a lot different. Some of the typical public relation activities being conducted to promote the image of a political party candidate, a for profit organization, or a product or service include but are not limited to the following: speaking opportunities, debates, publicity events, blogs, newsletters, curated internet articles, press releases, social media accounts, video and or audio press releases, and TV commercials.

At this point, the internet and other internet-related technologies are perhaps the most relevant real world example of a public relations strategy. This is because according to statistics, at least a 30 percent of the approximately 7 billion world population are or have been using the internet. Suppose we have a for profit company named Company X; that it operates in the consumer electronics and computer industries with a combined world market share for the two industries of a meager 5 percent; that the strength of Company X's products and services lie on the high end hardware components inside the chip and its main weakness lie on the lousy design of the products. Using public relation strategies such as having technology or to be even more specific, consumer electronic and computer journalists or bloggers review the company and its products and services and publish whatever the resulting impression via a popular consumer electronics website, Company X would be able to accurately get its position in the world market. The company's management would be more aware that if they would do dramatic changes to improve the aesthetic aspect of the products,

they would be able to get a larger share of the international market, thanks to the blunt but accurate views presented by bloggers and technology journalists.

Public Relations and its Contribution to Organizations

The public relations industry aims to help not only politicians and government departments but all types of organization in general. Most people these days think that public relation officers only work to manipulate the minds of the people and to make them believe on something for the sake of profits and revenues of for profit organizations despite the lack of truthfulness behind such actions. According to the PRSA, “ public relations is more than just managing the flow of information between an organization and its publics; it is a communications discipline that engages and informs key audiences, builds important relationships and brings vital information back into an organization for analysis and action that has a real, measurable impact on the achievement of strategic organizational goals” . The thing that makes public relations processes different from publicity stunts, spins, and other forms of media and information manipulation is the relationship building part. Public relations agencies actually aim to not just deliver information to its target audiences but at the same time, it does so to build and nurture a mutually benefiting relationship and not to manipulate the truth. In fact, manipulating the truth for the best financial interests of a particular organization would work directly against their goal of building relationships. A communications environment characterized by transparency, honesty, and accuracy would always be the best breeding ground for a mutually beneficial relationship and one that is the opposite of

such—the type of environment that media manipulation builds is the perfect environment that target audiences, regardless of their sector, would stay away from.

The contributions that public relations could possibly make for an organization regardless of its sector varies on the type of public relations strategy or method being employed because as mentioned earlier, the public relations industry has quite a number of branches. A consumer or product public relations strategy would for example, be a good tool to expose the strengths and weaknesses of a for profit organization's product and or services. Depending on the result of the consumer review and the popularity of the publishing blog or website, such move could lead to increased brand and corporate awareness and in the long run, larger sales and profit figures. The public relations industry has served as a two way communication medium that both organizations, regardless of their sector, and their target audiences—which are usually the masses. It has also enabled both groups to enjoy the fruits of accuracy and transparency of information. This discussion goes directly in line with the way how we defined public relations before: public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.

Recommendations for the Managing Director of the Powering Queensland

The chosen topic organization for this paper is Powering Queensland. As a brief overview of the organization and the public relations-related issues that it faces, Powering Queensland is an Australia-based energy company which also happens to be publicly listed in the ASX or Australian Securities

Exchange. Specifically, it operates in the dirty energy industry, providing Queensland with approximately half of the power it requires. Powering Queensland's dilemmas include: their inability to know what residents of Brisbane know or feel about dirty power, and its effects on climate change and the emissions trading scheme; its blindness when it comes to its own public image given that it predominantly operates in the dirty energy production sector. Basically, the organizational goals—what the organization is trying to achieve, can be directly related to the organizational problems and or issues mentioned above. What Powering Queensland is trying to achieve at this point is to use public relations to develop an image of what the public thinks about it, about it being a producer of dirty energy, and in relation to environmental issues such as the climate change, and to economic issues such as the ratification of the emissions trading scheme. Based on the in-depth discussion of public relations in the previous sections of this paper, it can be said that Powering Queensland can never go wrong in their decision to rely on the public relations industry in addressing their organization problems. As discussed earlier, public relations agencies work bilaterally contrary to the common perception that the organizations are the only ones who could initiate a communication and send messages and reflections to their target audiences—this actually refers to publicity only. In short, Powering Queensland could well use certain public relations strategies to initiate a line of communication between them and their target markets. There are a lot of modern ways that could help the organization achieve just this. Establishing a forum website or an internet forum website to be more specific would for example be a direct way to address the problem. An

internet forum website basically works just like a normal personal forum only that the users talk, suggests, recommends, and share their insights in front of a computer that is connected to the internet. It is an online communication medium that promotes a two way form of interaction between Powering Queensland in this case, and its publics and stakeholders—the energy powers, the political players, etc. In addition to this, there are a lot of additional communications features that can be embedded in an internet forum website. A chat room addendum for example can be a great tool in providing a more direct and express line of communication between any two or more people who want to communicate on a particular organizational, economic, or environmental issue. A feature that allows users to post questionnaires and or surveys that can be related to almost any type of issue can also be beneficial to all parties especially for Powering Queensland because it basically aims to know what its stakeholders think of the organization and its being a key player in the dirty energy industry despite worldwide efforts to counter the harmful effects of high carbon emissions to the environment and towards a larger extent, climate change.

The recommendation for the managing director of Powering Queensland at this point is to establish a closed or private message board or internet forum website. It would be of utmost importance to instruct the assigned programmers and code writers to limit the access to the internet forum to the company's stakeholders only to prevent confusion and the overflow of opinions. The thread, chat room, and survey posting features would actually be more than enough for Powering Queensland to achieve their current organizational goals and address their dilemmas. The problems that the

organization faces are actually simple and could easily be solved by using almost any form of public relations tools and strategy. However, based on the assessment of the authors of this paper, it appeared that using a message board and internet forum would be an all in one solution to Powering Queensland's problems. This public relations strategy is actually not just applicable to the case of Powering Queensland but to almost any other case. Communication, a two way one, is usually the key to solving organization problems and it so happened that this is the area where the public relations industries excel at—establishing stable and reliable communication lines between an organization and its stakeholders.

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