

# Pr trends contributing to growth

Literature, Russian Literature



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As organizations continue to seek ways in which to enhance their profits through international expansion, most of them are increasingly turning to PR in order to reach cross-cultural foreign markets. PR practitioners today have a critical role to play in the organization's success, specifically by being the mediator between their firms and the public and building relations with stakeholders who could potentially enhance or constrain the organization's mission (Theaker & Yaxley, 2013). In this role, PR practitioners are involved in seeking and disseminating information, of which the former provides the organization with insight on how the organization is perceived by the public. One part of the public that has increased influence on the growth of PR in organization is confrontation with activist groups like Greenpeace. Activism has become more relevant to the PR field for several reasons, including the fact that organizations have to become more effective in dealing with these groups (Theaker & Yaxley, 2013). Moreover, activism has become a major rejuvenator for organizations as management has to change the way that they manage their relationship with activist groups in society.

The McLibel case is a good example of how companies have been forced to change their PR strategy to deal with activist groups, as well as providing a blueprint for research into activism's cause and effect relationship with organizations. In this case, McDonalds had been spending almost \$2 billion on promotion and advertising its products and restaurants annually because of a firm belief in defending their reputation (Theaker & Yaxley, 2013).

Defense of the company's reputation was also taken up through legal action, whereby most of their critics were forced to apologize in order to avoid

litigation. However, this strategy of attempting to remain unchallenged was tested when the activist group Greenpeace attempted to effect a change in their policy. Their libel action against McDonalds started when they designed and distributed a leaflet about what was wrong about McDonalds and what the company did not want the public to know about their operations. They criticized McDonalds of being partly responsible for starvation in developing nations, as well as for the destruction of tropical rainforests. Moreover, McDonalds was also accused of exploiting children in their promotions and ads, animal cruelty, poor working conditions for employees, and serving food that could cause heart disease and cancer (Theaker & Yaxley, 2013). The activist group advocated that the public should boycott products from McDonalds, requiring a direct response from McDonalds to save their company's profitability.

Theaker and Yaxley (2013) propose that organizations, such as McDonalds in this case, must deal with activist groups through relevant and effective public relations strategies in order to maintain their reputation. To begin with, activist groups like Greenpeace have necessitated the use of two-way communication by organizations to learn about the consequences of their actions on all relevant publics, especially activist groups. In addition, organizations have had to increasingly use two-way communications as part of their PR strategy to tell the public about the organization's actions to remedy negative consequences resulting from their operations. As such, PR practitioners must be flexible and use new messaging and strategy to deal effectively with activism. Moreover, PR practitioners in the organization are increasingly required to pursue continuous communication efforts with

activist groups because of their ever-changing stances, particularly because activist groups have access to the media and government officials (Theaker & Yaxley, 2013). Finally, PR practitioners today have to pursue a proactive, balanced, and on-going program of relations with the public that take the legitimacy of activist groups into account by not underestimating the impact that these groups may have on their reputation. Overall, activist groups have significantly contributed to the growth of PR practice.

#### Reference

Theaker, A., & Yaxley, H. (2013). *The public relations strategic toolkit: An essential guide to successful public relations practice*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.