

# Sample essay on public relations: the coca cola company

[Business](#), [Company](#)



In general terms, public relations refer to the various methods used by a company to disseminate messages and information about its services, products, overall company image, employees, customers, suppliers, and other interested community members. The main point or aim of public relations is to make the general public think positively and favorably about the organization and its products. Some of the tools used for public relations include press conferences, speaking engagements, news releases and community service programs. Public relations is often confused with another marketing element called advertising, but there is clear-cut difference between the two terms. Advertising is a process whose main goal is to generate a company's sales while public relations, on the other hand, aim at generating goodwill. Companies have nowadays released the huge impact that its public relations has on its performance. Consequently, companies have started investing more resources in the public relations sector in the hope of improving their overall standing within the public. This paper aims to explore one of the world's major corporations on how it has successfully incorporated the element of public relations in its business process. The paper will analyze how the Coca Cola Company has used public relations to create a brand and influence public opinion. The paper will also look at how the company is adapting to social media sites and avenues in the 21st century. In addition, the role of public relations in times of crisis will be discussed. This will be done by analyzing a crisis that the organization has previously faced and how the company handled this crisis. Finally, the paper will conduct a comparison and contrast of the similarities and differences of the Coca Cola Company's public relations with those of a non-profit

organization.

Coca Cola is a globally known enterprise. The soft drink company is recognized throughout the world and its main Coke beverage can even be argued to be one of the world's most favorite beverages. This fact is not only supported by not only the beverage's large sale volumes, but also rave customer reviews from all parts of the globe. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the Coca Cola Company has managed to make the Coke beverage an internationally recognized brand. This has been achieved through various means and processes with one of them being public relations (Moss et al., 2010). As mentioned earlier, companies in recent years have been dedicating more funds into their public relations sector and the Coca Cola Company has not been left behind. The company's public relations is an exemplary one.

One of the most brilliant public relations strategies that have been used by the company over the years and that has helped to solidify its branding has been the use of the Santa Claus especially during the holiday's season. The company has used the same depiction of Santa Claus for more than eighty years. This has included the painting style, the features, expressions, tone and overall characteristics. Many may consider this old and outdated, but this is one of the company's major public relations stunts (Moss et al., 2010). In this case, old is traditional and is essentially the Coca Cola's intended brand image, which is "Classic." Coca Cola through this feature tries to state that it is essentially the soft drink that was enjoyed by the current's generations grandparents and also their grandparents back in the day (Wakefield, 2000). Even in the modern day, Coca Cola bottles still have the

word “ Classic” imprinted on them. It aims to show that the company will remain true to its original, which is to avail a credible refreshment to people throughout the world. In simple words, the phrase “ classic” is, in fact, an image in itself and which consequently promotes brand consistency, recognition, quality and trust (Moss et al., 2010).

In addition to this “ classic” image, the Coca Cola Company has also enacted a public relations strategy that relates to natural conservation efforts (Moss et al., 2010). A popular Coca Cola advert featured polar bears drinking the Coke beverage. This advertisement led to a worldwide public relations campaign in the year 2008. Here, the company started an intensive campaign to save polar bears in the world. This campaign was dubbed “ Polar Bear Support Fund” and its main goal was to lessen the involvement of human beings in global climate change (Moss et al., 2010). According to Coca Cola, human activities were causing climatic change in the world, which was leading to the destruction of some natural habitats for wild animals such as the ice lands for the polar bears. The company joined hands with the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) to push forth the agenda. This was without a doubt an effective public relations stunt because after viewing happy polar bears in the commercials; every customer would without a doubt want to take part in saving them especially after learning about the environmental dilemma they had (Moss et al., 2010). The final effect is that the company’s overall image would be enhanced. It would be recognized as a conservative company, and its brand would grow and become even more popular as a result. This is why this is indeed an effective public relations campaign.

The Coca Cola Company has severally other tools such as press releases and

news releases to further promote its brand (Wakefield, 2000). It releases these to inform the public of its activities in the hope that it will draw positive light and further enhance its overall company brand. For example, in relation to its financial results or earnings, the company writes its reports in a language that is reader-friendly and that, as a result, promotes the people who may have an interest in the company's business. This includes consumers, investors, and employees. It gives them an opportunity to be able to track the company's performance (Wakefield, 2000). Another effective PR strategy by the company is making live podcast conference calls to ensure that any of the mentioned parties who have an interest can take part. All the mentioned activities play a huge role in promoting the overall brand and image of the Coca Cola Company and swaying the public opinion to its favor. This makes the Coca Cola Company to retain a high standing in the beverage market.

The rapid advent of technology has necessitated the need for companies to adapt to technological changes and adopt new ways of doing things to maintain relevance. Massive technology advent has particularly been witnessed in the communications sector. In the business world, the main impact has been felt in the way companies communicate with their esteemed stakeholders such as customers, investors and suppliers. Back in the day, the only to do this was through old-fashioned means such as printed brochures, formal letters and formal media releases. However, new ways of communication have emerged which have enabled companies to enact their public relations in better ways. Social media has emerged as a very resourceful public relations tool, and Coca Cola has been effectively adapting

to the present social media sites and other related venues (Coca Cola, 2014).

Recently, Coca Cola has a huge online presence especially in social media sites. In addition, the company has its own website where it gives links to the various social sites where it has a presence. Currently, the Coca Cola's homepage contains links to social sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and Youtube and Instagram.

The company's posts on Facebook and Twitter are engaging and conversational and rarely have any promotional feel. The interaction on the YouTube platform takes place on a daily basis. The company updates its videos frequently. On Flickr and Instagram, the company's pictures and photos are regularly updated and usually feature those taken at Coca Cola events (Mayes, 2011).

Coca Cola has found social media to be a very effective tool indeed, when it comes to public relations. In recent years, the use of social media and other related avenues has acted a foundation for effective social marketing plan. For instance, two social media campaigns that the company has run in the last few years have proven to be very successful. These are the " Expedition 206" and the " 24-hour Session with Maroon 5" (Mayes, 2011. In " Expedition 206," the company sent three selected bloggers on a trip across the globe (all expenses paid). This team of bloggers used several social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter to document the trip and essentially uncover the things that make the people of the world happy. In the second media campaign, the company invited fans from across the globe to help Maroon 5, a famous pop band to compose a song in 24 hours.

Enthusiastic fans used Facebook and Twitter to take part and updates were constantly posted throughout the session on Coca Cola's Twitter and Facebook pages (Mayes, 2014).

As observed, Coca Cola has significantly adapted to social media sites and has found that it is indeed a very effective tool. This tool is mainly targeted at the youth who are the most users of social network sites. The Coca Cola Company has found that to stay at par with the youth and their trends, it must be active in the social media. As mentioned earlier, however, the company does not only use the social media for product promotion purposes but in real sense uses the platform as more of engagement platform where it can freely interact with the people further enhancing its overall brand image.

As it is common with any other business entities, the Coca Cola has had its fair share of scandals. A company is not however judged by the scandals that it finds itself in but by how it responds to these scandals. To this regard, the company has been nothing short of brilliant. It has effectively been able to manage the scandals facing the company.

One of the fiercest scandals to have rocked the Coca Cola's company took place in 1999 in Belgium where over 100 children fell seriously ill after consuming the soft drink (Victoria and Peppas, 2003). The Company was forced to recall about 15 million containers of the drink. This was after the health ministry of Belgium banned all drinks affiliated to the Company. The situation shook the entire Belgian nation, not just because the soft drink was suspected of causing sickness to schoolchildren but also because the Coca-Cola company had for a long time been a trusted organization (Taylor, 2000).

Consequently, the company was forced to recall all its products from all Belgian stores (Victoria and Peppas, 2003).

The company was however very swift in responding. It made great strides in identifying the particular parts or problems of the production process, which could have led to the crisis. It particularly identified two specific problems within its production and distribution segments, which could have caused the illnesses observed in the children. These problems included the presence of carbon dioxide that was not of sufficient quality and that consequently affected the odor and taste of several bottled drinks (Victoria and Peppas, 2003). The other was an offensive odor that emanated from the canned drinks outside surface (Victoria and Peppas, 2003).

The company showed deep commitment in solving this problem and even released a public statement to reassure its consumers that it was taking all necessary steps to make sure that its products were of the highest quality. The CEO of the company made an official statement addressing the problem and apologizing to those affected (Abelson, 1999).

The great commitment shown by Coca Cola prompted the Health Ministry in Belgium finally to lift the ban on Coca Cola on the condition that the company used fresh material, thoroughly cleansed its plants and reviewed safety measures, all of which the company agreed to do (Victoria and Peppas, 2003)..

The company's dealing with this crisis was relatively effective. With no time, its operations were back in action and sales started rising slowly but surely. The only that can probably be faulted about this response is socially in regards to the official company statement which relatively took a long time



to be released. A company should always be prepared to release a public statement without delay in case of crisis to prevent further suspicion and speculation.

It would be wise to compare and contrast Coca Cola's public relations with that of another company. To get even better view, it is good to compare it with a non-profit organization of a global nature such as the Red Cross.

A close analysis reveals that in spite of the two entities being so different, both employ significantly similar public relation tools. The most conspicuous is the social media tool. In recent years, the Red Cross just like the Coca Cola Company has used social media as a way of engaging with the community. Red Cross, which often targets crisis and disasters in fact, gets its initial reports from sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

The intention of the social media public campaign of the Red Cross and the Coca Coal Company however seems to differ a little. The Red Cross campaign is aimed at empowering social communities and growing a network of people who can execute the entity's mission to prepare, prevent and finally respond to disasters, crisis and emergencies.

Unlike the Coca Cola Company, which uses public relations ventures such as environmental conservancy to improve its image and create a brand, the improvement of the Red Cross brand in actual sense depends on its ability to deal successfully with crisis and disasters.

Another element of similarity in terms of public relations is also observed in terms of media and press releases from both Companies. Both companies often have several press and media releases, which inform the public the organization's progress and performances and give them a chance to be part

of the organizations.

In conclusion, it is fair to state that the Coca Cola Company has a very effective public relations element. The contribution of this element to the overall success of the company on a global scale is conspicuous. Other companies, and not just those in the beverage business should follow suit and enact their own public relations campaigns that will not only help to push their brand, but will also establish long lasting relationships with customers and eventually lead to brand loyalty.

## References

- Abelson, R. (1999, June 16). In a Crisis, Coke Tries to Be Reassuring - New York Times. Retrieved May 30, 2014, from <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/06/16/business/in-a-crisis-coke-tries-to-be-reassuring.html>
- Coca Cola (2014). Online social media: The Coca-Cola Company. Retrieved May 29, 2014, from <http://www.coca-colacompany.com/stories/online-social-media-principles>
- Moss, D., Powell, M., & DeSanto, B. (2010). Public relations cases: International perspectives. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Parkinson, D., & Conference Board. (1999). Corporate achievement in employee and community relations. New York, N. Y: Conference Board.
- Taylor, M. (2000). Cultural variance as a challenge to global public relations: A case study of the Coca-Cola scare in Europe. Public Relations Review.
- Wakefield, R. I. (2000). World-class public relations: A model for effective public relations in the multinational. Journal of Communication Management, 12(24), 13-22.
- Victoria Johnson, Spero C. Peppas, (2003) " Crisis management in Belgium: <https://assignbuster.com/sample-essay-on-public-relations-the-coca-cola-company/>

the case of Coca-Cola", *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*,  
8 (1), 18 - 22

Mayes, Laura. (2011). Effectively Incorporating Social Media: A Case Study  
on Coca-Cola.