

Today, the
government
departments, and in
their own



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Today, all of these objectives have merged into the current public relations practice. Lots of companies have appointed Liaison Officers who do liaison work mainly with the government departments, and in their own way do the public relations work for the company in government circles.

The objectives of a public relations programme has broader than those of other promotional strategies. They build up the prestige and image of all the sections of the organisation. An example of a non-marketing oriented public relations objective is a company's attempt to gain favourable public opinion during a long strike. As a result, public relations departments are not always placed within the structure of the marketing organisation. In fact, in many companies, public relations officers report directly to the chief executive.

Publicity is also known as "marketing public relations," and is distinguished from advertising in that publicity is not paid for by the organisation, while advertising it. Instead, the firm actively seeks to gain favourable notice in the communications media for its overall image or for particular products or programmes.

The publicity comes from newscasters, columnists, and the like; it comes to the receiver as "the truth" rather than as a "commercial." The part of public relations that is most directly related to promoting a company's products or services is publicity. Since it is designed to familiarise the general public with a product's characteristics and advantages, it is an information activity of the public relations department. Some publicity is done to promote the company's image or viewpoint; but a significant aspect of publicity is to provide information about products, particularly new ones. Publicity releases covering products are sent to media editors for possible inclusion in

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newspapers, magazines, and the like. Many consumers tend to accept the truth of a news story more readily than they do of an advertisement. Some of these releases are used to fill voids in the publication, while others are used in regular features.

In either case, publicity releases are a valuable supplement to advertising. Some critics assert that the publication of product publicity is directly related to the amount of advertising revenue coming from a firm. But this is not true of most respected newspapers and magazines. Nevertheless, publicity has significant disadvantages. The marketer cannot control publicity as easily as an advertising campaign or personal selling. A newspaper columnist may print a part of a firm's publicity release, and then criticise it line by line.

Also, public relations personnel may find it difficult to promote products aggressively, since they often need to placate threatening or hostile audiences, including consumers, shareholders and the government. Philip Kotler has outlined three principal tasks that an organisation must undertake if it wishes to use publicity for promotional purposes: 1. Define the objective of the publicity effort. This includes the target market, the target variable in the market and the time frame for the publicity campaign.

2. Search for publicity ideas to achieve these objectives. 3. Plan for specific media involvement. Set up face-to-face events and co-ordinate coverage in newspapers, magazines, radio and TV. Publicity is also important for non-profit organisations. Since many of these organisations have limited advertising budgets, they often depend on mass media publicity to spread their message and boost membership and contributions.

Today, public relations have to be considered as an integral part of the promotional strategy, even though its basic objectives extend far beyond attempting to influence the purchase of a particular good. It is, however, difficult to measure public relations programmes, especially their publicity aspects and make a significant contribution to the achievement of promotional goals.