



## PUBLIC RELATIONS FUNCTIONS

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### Abstract

Public relations represent that element of the promotional mix, which is mainly based on communication and aims to evaluate the public's attitude, identify those aspects that can shape the concern of consumers.

The aim is to develop programs that achieve the understanding and favorable attitude of the public towards the company and its products, informing potential customers about the nature and characteristics of the products. Everything is carried out with the aim of encouraging customers to buy the products or services, investors to get involved.

From this perspective, we will follow the functions performed by public relations in daily activity. Because, in this context, public relations appear in the form of direct contacts made, constantly and systematically, by companies with different categories of public, with influential people from the management of other institutions in the country or abroad, with opinion leaders.

*Keywords: public relations, functions, communication*

In a society in constant change, in which image and communication play an essential role, public relations represent a key tool in building, strengthening and maintaining trust between an organization and its publics.

The functions that public relations perform are multiple and complex, contributing both to the development of the organizational image and to the maintenance of effective communication between all parties involved.

One of the fundamental functions of public relations is *information*, which involves the correct, clear and transparent transmission of information to the internal and external public. This function has a major role in building trust, maintaining the image and facilitating good communication between the organization and society.

Undoubtedly, the information function is important in managing organizational crises. In difficult times, rapid and correct communication is vital to avoid misinformation and panic. By transmitting verified information, official statements, clear messages, the public relations department can mitigate the negative impact of a crisis on the organization's reputation. "Bidirectional symmetrical communication is the most effective form of public relations, especially in crisis situations" (Grundig et Hunt, 1984, p. 22).

Importantly, effective information is also essential in involving the public in organizational decisions. Through surveys, consultations and information campaigns, organizations can obtain relevant feedback, which allows them to adapt their strategies according to the needs and expectations of the public.

At the same time, in a democratic society, the information function of public relations supports the transparency and accountability of institutions, whether public or private. Open and honest communication contributes to creating a climate of trust between citizens and institutions.

Any company or organization has the responsibility to convey clear, coherent and truthful messages to its public. This involves writing materials such as: press releases, organizing conferences, managing online platforms and other methods through which the public can be kept informed of the activities and position of the organization.

Because, „public relations means the management of strategic communication that builds beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics” (Wilcox, 2014, p. 6).

Another important role of public relations is that of *creating the public image*. A positive image of the organization is vital for shaping a long-term success. Through well-thought-out campaigns, information, awareness, and attitudinal change, important objectives for the respective organization can be achieved. To these are added strategic collaborations, sponsorships, and social responsibility activities. In this way, public relations

specialists contribute to shaping a strong and attractive identity in the eyes of public opinion. They are trained to respond quickly, to maintain the public's trust, even in tense situations.

Another function of public relations is *relationship building*. Public relations is not only addressed to customers or consumers, but to all audiences that play a decisive role in the life of the organization: employees, investors, authorities, media. By maintaining a constant and honest dialogue with these actors, a climate favorable to cooperation and loyalty is created.

Public relations undoubtedly also have a *strategic role*, contributing to the long-term planning of organizational communication. Because, this type of communication has a lot of meanings, a lot of purposes and about the same number of methods of expression and manifestation. It means the intentional transmission of data, information at the level of organizational structures. The entry of the individual into organizational spaces is based on the instinct of human cooperation. Beyond the genetic dimension of this behavior, there is also a pragmatic dimension. The individual has limited capacities and resources in terms of his intervention on the surrounding reality. Access to a more or less formalized group allows him to achieve goals impossible to achieve alone. This need for association of the individual does not only pursue instrumental goals, but also responds to affective or knowledge needs. The common values and beliefs of individuals are translated at the level of organizations through what is meant by organizational culture.

Public relations professionals analyze trends in society, monitor public opinion, and build strong relationships with their audiences.

In a world where trust is hard to earn and easy to lose, public relations is the link between an organization's intent and public perception.

Another important element that defines an important function performed by public relations is *the role in the organizational communication crisis*. Considered as "an interruption or blockage of communication within the organization or between the organization and its public, as a result of which the organization's communicational identity is affected" (Petcu, M., 2014, p.144), the communication crisis can affect, at a given time, the activity at the institutional level. The dimensions that this blockage at the communicational level encompasses are diverse, since the communication crisis can be both internal and external.

Internally, the confrontation in the institutional space takes place between the organization and its internal public, and the immediate consequence is a decrease in trust in the organization's management, which will lead to the establishment of informal communication leaders. In this case, a phenomenon harmful to the organization arises, because, during the crisis, informal communication becomes predominant, to the detriment of the formal one. Thus, there is a disruption of communication on official channels, raising a series of barriers in its way.

In the absence of good management of the communication crisis, manifested within the organization, the organizational identity will be affected, with repercussions on the image and it will also be able to propagate externally. Remaining on the same coordinates, an incoherent, ambiguous and contradictory external communication, regarding the institutional goals and the possibilities of achieving them, can throw the organization into a conflict situation with the companies in the environment in which it operates. Because, "the external communication crisis represents a confrontation between the organization and the extra-organizational environment and involves the emergence of alternative sources of communication. The organization is no longer considered by the public a credible and legitimate source of communication. Other actors communicate about the organization, the organization loses its role as the sole source of transmitting messages" (Ibidem, idem).

Viewed as living organisms, which go through a series of stages in their institutional life, organizations can face, at some point, a communication crisis, generated independently of their will and actions. Considered as a blockage of the communication flow either inside or outside the organization, the crisis can have effects, sometimes insurmountable, on the image of the organization, on the present or future links with the companies with which it collaborates. It is necessary to strengthen the management functions, a true and prolific collaboration between all members of the organization in order for it to overcome episodes of crisis in communication. And this is where the salutary action of public relations comes in.

In conclusion, the functions performed by public relations are multiple and essential for the success of any organization. From informing and building an image, to managing crises and establishing lasting connections, public relations contributes decisively to maintaining a solid reputation and strengthening the connection with the public.

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