**Public Relations**

Communication is a two- way process where messages and information sent are just as important as those that are received. Public relations is a two way communication process between an organisation and its public, a communication with a view to changing the mindsets of the public in a certain direction. We can therefore define public relations as a form of communication used to persuade or influence people using ethical means.

**Definition of Public Relations**

1. “Public Relations is the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics.”

Institute of Public Relations, USA

1. “Public Relations is a combination of philosophy, sociology, economics, language, psychology, journalism, communication and other knowledges into a system of human understanding."

Herbert M. Baus

1. "The degree of understanding and goodwill achieved between an individual, organisation or institution and the publics" Websters International Dictionary

**Origin of Public Relations**

Thomas Jefferson (1807) used the phrase "Public relations" in the place of "State of thought" while writing his seventh address to the US Congress.

In India, Great Indian Peninsular Railway Company Limited (GIP Railways) carried on publicity in Public Relations campaign in England for promote tourism to India through mass media and pamphlets.

During the time of First World War a central publicity board was set up at Bombay (now Mumbai) for disseminating war news to the public and press.

After Second World War the Public Relations activity gained importance both privates as well as Government started Public Relations campaigns.

**Role of Public Relations**

* To establish the relationship among the two groups i.e. organisation and public
* To function as an art or science of developing reciprocal understanding and goodwill.
* To analyse the public perception & attitude
* To identify the organisation policy with public interest
* To executes the programmes for communication with the public
* to educate audiences on the advantages of a product
* to promote goodwill for the organisation
* to create, maintain, protect and build the reputation of the organisation

**Steps in Public Relations**

Public relations involves:

1. Evaluation of public attitudes and opinions.
2. Formulation and implementation of an organization's procedures and policy regarding communication with its publics.
3. Coordination of communications programs.
4. Developing rapport and good-will through a two way communication process
5. Fostering a positive relationship between an organization and its public constituents.

**The ‘Publics’ in Public Relations**

A public is a group of individuals or organizations who recognize their connection with a common problem, cause or goal.

Ex. Employees, Media, Govt. agencies, consumers.

The most important aspect of public relations is to focus on the ‘key public’ or in other words, the people who will receive the communication. Let us consider the following list of products/services and public who use these products/services.

**Product / Service Public**

Hospitals Patients

Merchants Customers

Schools Students

Television Viewers

The desires, interests and needs of each of the above target public are different. ‘Understanding’ these differences and communicating in an ‘effective’ manner is a vital skill of public relations.

Nature of PR

While the definitions may vary, the nature of Public Relations indicates that it is essentially a task promoting rapport and goodwill between a person, firm or institution and the community at large through dissemination of information.

It seeks to earn support, mobilise or solicit favour for an idea, a cause, a problem, for an institution or an individual.

It uses a two-way communication in dealing with public opinion. First, it assesses the attitudes of the public towards the organisation. Next, it executes communication programmes to gain public understanding and acceptance of the management's point of view.

Public Relations aims to bring about harmonious and mutually advantageous adjustment between an organisation and the community through dissemination of ideas and also by providing feedback from the public to the management.

It also evaluates public attitudes, identifies policies that interests public and executes the programme of communication.

**Elements in Public Relations**

Briefly, Public Relations involves four major elements. They are inter-related and overlapping. In fact, one tends to lead to another.

These are :

a) Two-way Communication;

b) Mutual Understanding;

c) Caring for Public Opinion:

d) Social Responsibility.

1. **Two-way Communication;**

Public Relations philosophy puts great emphasis on the need for two-way communication. It is now fairly well accepted that feedback is important. How does one set it? Many misunderstandings spring from a total lack of or an inadequate communication. The foremost objective in any public relations programme, therefore is to improve existing channels of communication and to establish two-way flow of information. However, this is not as easy as it sounds! Even if you have a strong desire to communicate, there may be great difficulties in achieving success because of the barriers in communication process.

1. **Mutual Understanding**

Mutual understanding requires, by definition, a two-way communication. A Public Relations policy for any organisation should include both inward activity to assess the policies and behavior of the management, to see whether action is necessary to improve the organisation's image; and outward activity to inform the public about its achievements.

1. **Caring for Public Opinion**

Public opinion has been described as the "source spring" of Public Relations. Public opinion is the consensus of individual opinions of the majority among the masses based on their attitudes and widely held beliefs. Abraham Lincln said once, Public sentiments is everything. With public sentiments nothing can fail. Without public sentiment nothing can succeed.

1. **Social Responsibility**

Socially responsible organizations achieve a far greater positive image, loyalty and customer trust. Consumers expect companies to do more than make a profit, but also operate responsibly to address social and environmental issues. C*onsumers would boycott a company* if they learned of irresponsible or deceptive business practices. **So it should come as no surprise that brands are shifting their focus to environmental and societal issues.**

**Examples of Public Relations**

1. Corporations use marketing public relations (MPR) to convey information about the products they manufacture or services they provide to potential customers to support their direct sales efforts. Typically, they support sales in the short and long term, establishing and burnishing the corporation's branding for a strong, ongoing market.
2. Non-profit organizations, including schools and universities, hospitals, and human and social service agencies, use public relations in support of awareness programs, fund-raising programs, staff recruiting, and to increase patronage of their services.
3. Politicians use public relations to attract votes and raise money, and, when successful at the ballot box, to promote and defend their service in office, with an eye to the next election or, at career’s end, to their legacy.