

Internal and External Public of Public Relations

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Introduction

A saying goes “Don’t cry over the spilt milk”. Prevention is better than cure. Public relations is a professional field to keep the image of a person, company or corporations. Public Relations is the state of the relationship between a company or other organization or a famous person and the public. Public relations professionals work to build long-term relationships among individuals and institutions. Ex. Relationship of Rahul Gandhi with the youth.

First of all let us understand the meaning of the concept Public: Publics are the interested audiences that are important in some way to an organization including current and potential customers, current and potential employees and management, investors, vendors and suppliers, media, government, and opinion leaders. They can be internal within an organization or external from an organization.

1. Internal Public of Public Relations

An idiom goes “Charity begins at home”. If we want any good things to happen there should be change first from within. Understanding oneself or within is the basis of all transformation. It is in this context that internal public of public relations comes in. Internal publics are people employed by a firm or members of an organization and they are intimately related with the functioning of the organisation. Internal public relations is a special PR discipline which concentrates on enhancing companies relationships with the employees by facilitating good communication among the management and the employees, boosting their morale and giving them the right information at the right time.

Many corporate wizards like Hindustan Lever, Telco, Air India, Standard Chartered Bank, etc. suffered setback due to noncooperation of its internal publics. In case of Hindustan Lever, its employees' union during their agitation called a press conference and exposed various anti-customer practices of the company. In Telco, after the agitation which was followed by strike and lockout during which many people lost their lives in the police firing, the company launched massive corporate image building advertisements in newspapers and on television, based on team work among its employees, but it failed to achieve its purpose. Whether it is employees of the company or its suppliers or shareholders, each one of them has special affinity and attachment with the company.

Internal Public of Public Relations includes Shareholders or Investors, Employees, Suppliers, Distributors, Retailers/ Dealers and Other business associations

1.1 Shareholders/owners/investors relations

Shareholder is the legal owner of the company. He provides finances to the company either as shareholder or as a long-term or short-term creditor. They are entitled to dividend, rights shares, bonus shares, discount coupons for purchase of companies' products or concessional usage of its services and gifts on special occasions like annual conference, anniversary or celebration. Shareholders deserve fair treatment, get statutory information, transfer of shares to them, information on change of address or non-receipt of dividend. However we see that most of the time the Company's PR function seems to be performed only in rebuttal or quick requital after the complaint appears in newspapers.

1.2 Employess Relations

Employees are the hands and feet of the company. It is through them that the company fulfils its objectives. It needs their cooperation and understanding on a continuous basis in all its activities including the public relations activities. The principle of self-respect, self-determination and self judgment are to be applied when dealing with employees. If the company is able to communicate well with the employees and seek their participation and cooperation, they can act as the best public relations agents of the company while dealing with their friends, relations, neighbours, and business associates. The leadership and management styles of our executives, their values, attitudinal profile, all have undergo a sea-change in order to effectively deal with the situation.

1.3 Suppliers Relations

Suppliers are the business associates of the company who provide all types of raw material for the business activities of the company. Suppliers have a direct and crucial role in the functioning and profitability of the company. They have to supply the right quality and quantity of materials for the company. Suppliers need the company and the company need the suppliers. When the good gestures of supplier to the company are not responded with an equally good gesture relationship get strained. (Non-payment or delay of supplier's bill, high amount of rejection or raw materials, rude treatment). A good company cannot be happy if its suppliers are not happy because they are its business associates and they also have to make profit.

Ex. Automobiles co. Like Maruti Udyog, Telco, Eicher etc. depend heavily on their suppliers.

1.4 Distributors/Dealers/Retailers Relations

"Distributors are the face of the company". They are the link between the company and its dealers. The success of the business of a company heavily depends on the performance of the distributors/ dealers, more so in Indian economy where the knowledge of the consumer about the company and its product is relatively poor. Retailer/Distributors/ Traders are the friend, philosopher, and guide of the customers or clients. In order to build up the company relationship

Internal PR needs to announce the various schemes available for them like prizes, discount, and provide them alternatives both monetary and non-monetary benefits.

1.5 Other Associate Relations

It comprises of promoters, Management consultants, lawyers, solicitors, auditors, friends and family members of the directors of the company and the advisers of the company. These people may not be forefront of the company but their role and influence on the working of the company cannot be undermined under any circumstances. Company needs to show care and give them due recognition for their work and support. Copies of company publications, annual reports, new issues, preferential issues etc., should be regularly sent to them to give them special feeling that they matter to the company and they are eligible for these privileges. Congratulatory letters on their birthdays, marriage anniversary, and special achievement is a good gesture.

What should Internal Public of Public Relations do?

They should Share key messages with all the members. Give recognition to people during birthday or when they receive award. Internal Publics professionals keep the image of the company fly high. Internal Publics of an organisation looks into the goodwill of its collaborators and maintain good relations. They take corrective actions when problems arise within the company.

2. External Public of Public Relations

External publics are people and organizations that are clients doing business with a firm or agency or company.

Ex. Coalgate scam-company influence the politicians and politicians allocates nation's coal deposits to them

The subject matter of External Publics is that it concentrates on issues pertaining the values, policies, procedures and attitude of the company towards various groups of people in society. No company or organisation can survive and flourish and survive without the active support and cooperation of publics.

External Publics of Public Relations includes Consumers/Customers, Community, Mass Media, Government, Financial Institutions, Action Groups and General Publics

2.1 Consumer/Customer

Customer is the centre of today's business activity. A consumer is a person who purchases goods and services for personal use. An External PR needs to educate the audience pertaining the product or about the organisation and then get the suggestions of the audience. Present era of management belongs to marketing where every happening in the company revolves around the customer. Mahatma Gandhi, the father our nation, a very simplistic man in his lifestyle and who does not involve much in business yet understood the important of customers deeply. He said, "A customer or consumer is not a means of business, but he is the purpose of business. He is not an intruder on our premises, he is our quest. He is the last inspector of our quality and he is always right". Customer education, Market research, public opinion polls, customer satisfaction level, after sales services and constant relations is a must for company to public.

Ex. Customer meets, free servicing by Usha Sewing machine, Godrej typewriters

2.2 Community Relations

Looking after and protecting the interest of the community is the essence of community relations. Community represents that public which stays in the close vicinity of the company, its office, plants and godown, warehouse etc. Therefore it becomes a social and moral obligation of the industry to compensate community for these losses by making its humble contribution. In gratitude to public companies need to provide various types of services like education service,

sewage and sanitation facilities, employment facilities and health services and others. Participation in community's social and cultural functions, making generous contribution towards its success by giving donation and infrastructural support leads to goodwill and longer lasting relations between the company and its community.

2.3 Media Relations

Mass media gives mass exposure to company's activity. It includes Print Media and Electronic Media. With the improvement in transportation system, technology and increase in the literacy rate, newspapers, magazines, story books, comics, weekly newspapers, Radio, TV, and Internet are becoming more and more popular. The winning, dining, or gifting image of public relations practitioners is greatly due to how they interact with media. Mass media have always remain a very strong source of voicing opinion, building propaganda and influencing masses.

2.4 Government Relations

In a country like India, all major institutions for control of trade, business and industry are with the government. The purpose of the relationship with government seems to be disappearing because of vested interest of Individual or corporate. From the point of view of public relations government and its machinery can be divided into two categories depending on their characteristics. i.e. politicians and bureaucrats. The public relation professionals have to ensure that without hurting the feelings of either of them and equally balancing their relationship with them, they have to pursue the objectives of their company, department and the profession.

Ex. Sugar and cement industry as a whole make substantial donations to political parties to seek favours after elections

2.5 Relationship with Financial Institutions

"Finance is the life blood of business". Financial institutions have very important role in all commercial transactions of the company, commencement of business, its expansion and growth and even in retardation. Visit site and plant of the company, giving details of their projects, technical and financial collaboration and market projection helps the financial institutions to understand the company's plan better and thus gain more confidence. Timely submission of progress reports, payment of principal and interest amount and keeping financial institution abreast with the latest relevant information further helps the company to strengthen its credibility and goodwill with financial institution.

2.6 Relations with Action Group

Action Group is a group of people that work together to try to achieve changes relating to a particular situation or in order to help a particular group of people. The enactment of Consumer Protection Act, 1986, and the framing of the rules in 1987 have been a major milestone in the role of Action group. It is small in number but very high in terms of their potential in building or exposing malpractices or inflict setback to the image and reputation of the company. They have high ego and esteem profile because of power, credibility and ability to influence masses. Relationship with them could be build up by regular dialogue, include them in the PR list and appreciate them.

Ex. Tarun Tejpal ruin the image of Tehelka

2.7 Relationship with General Public

General public is the ultimate judge of all the activities of the company, based on which it will survive or die. They are the largest of all the external publics of a company and probably the most tolerant of all the public's. Interaction with general public is through Radio, Television, exhibitions, banners, hoardings, leaflets etc. is very important because they are the ones who will buy the product of the company. Companies need to show interest on social issues such as

illiteracy, environment protection, pollution control to improve the quality of life of public and not just their 'Product or Brand' Most of the consumer goods companies whether it is Parle Beverages Ltd., or Cadbury India Ltd., have suffered massive setbacks whenever they got involved in some controversies.

What should External Public of Public Relations do?

External publics need to determine target outlets. Consider what local newspapers, Web sites, newsletters, radio stations, cable outlets and television stations provide news in your community. Make a list of these top outlets and find contact information (usually available on their Web site) for each one. Build relationships, Prepare PR tools like fact sheet of the organisation or company, its background and its plans for the year. Enjoy news release success, Evaluates the and consider your audience.

Summary

The internal publics of an organisation are part of that core group which has very intimate relationship and a stake in the company. Company need to win their loyalty, confidence, trust them and provide them facilities. Lukewarm attitude to them exposes the company to high risk. They include Shareholders or Investors, Employees, Suppliers, Distributors, Retailers/ Dealers, Other business associations. The external publics of a company consist of its External Publics of Public Relations includes Consumers/Customers, Community, Mass Media, Government, Financial Institutions, Action Groups and General Publics. It is the image and credibility that it enjoys in the minds of external publics which makes an organisation successful.

Conclusion

The public relations activities of the company are confined to its internal and external publics. If internal publics respect the company and hold it in high esteem, directly and indirectly, they create a favourable environment for the company to approach external publics. Communication with external publics is the lifeline of the organisation as it gives identity, image, reputation and credibility and based on which a company will get their support. Good internal and external public relations are like the blood in the human body. As long as it circulates, the man is hale and hearty and the moment it stops it causes to human life like heart attack, cancer, stroke and so on. Companies have to design specific and special communication channels with each group of publics to enjoy their continued support and patronage.