

**19**

PUBLIC RELATIONS – AN INTRODUCTION

In your first module, you have learnt that communication, in one form or another, plays a significant part in our daily lives. We use it all the time, often without realizing it, depending on our needs or desires at that moment.

Let us consider a situation where a school going child is leaving home to catch a bus to reach school. What does the child look for? Yes, you are right. The bus stop. This is often found in the form of a shelter with bus routes/ numbers indicated on a board for the convenience of passengers.

Let us take another example: the sign boards you find on the roads give you directions on how to reach a particular place. Imagine how difficult it would have been without these sign boards.

These are all common examples of communication exercises for the benefit of the public.

In this lesson, you will learn about the definition and evolution of public relations and about different types of public relations.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to do the following :

- state the meaning of public relations ;
- explain the purpose of public relations with examples;
- trace the evolution of public relations;
- discuss the government public relations structure and strategy;
- differentiate between different areas of public relations.



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19.1 CONCEPT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Let us first try and understand the meaning of the term ‘public relations’.

You have already learnt that communication is a two- way process where messages and information sent are just as important as those that are received. The same applies to public relations. It is all about communicating with others, either through the spoken word or written word, or by using a visual or some other means.

Communication and public relations are linked to each other and play an important role in a wide variety of ways throughout our lives.

You have learnt in the first module that we can communicate by merely looking, by speaking, by our posture or by our actions. Communication, if used properly, can be used to inform, educate, reassure, evoke sympathy of situations as and when they occur.

Thus we can say that:

Public relations involves:

- i) a two way communication process between an organisation and its public
- ii) 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.

It is important to understand that communication here, i.e. in public relations is a receiver phenomenon. It is controlled not by the sender but rather by the receiver or, in other words, the audience. For e.g. if the speaker is gifted and delivers a speech effectively in Hindi but the audience does not understand Hindi, no real communication takes place.

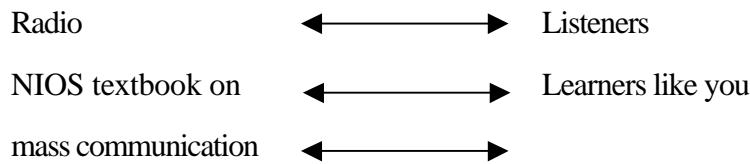
Therefore, the most important aspect of public relations is to focus on the ‘key public’ or in other words, the people who will receive the communication. Let us consider the following list of products/services and public who use these products/services.

Product / Service		Public
Hospitals	←————→	Patients
Merchants	←————→	Customers
Schools	←————→	Students
Television	←————→	Viewers

ethical : correct



Notes



In the above list, you will find that the target group or public that a hospital has to focus on are the patients. Likewise, merchants have to address customers, schools, their students, television its viewers, radio its listeners and NIOS its learners.

You will find that 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. The key words here are ‘understanding’ and ‘effective’. The public relations situation is an effort to win the support of the public by addressing their wants, interests and needs rather than your own.

The sign boards that you find on the roads is a simple example of public relations.

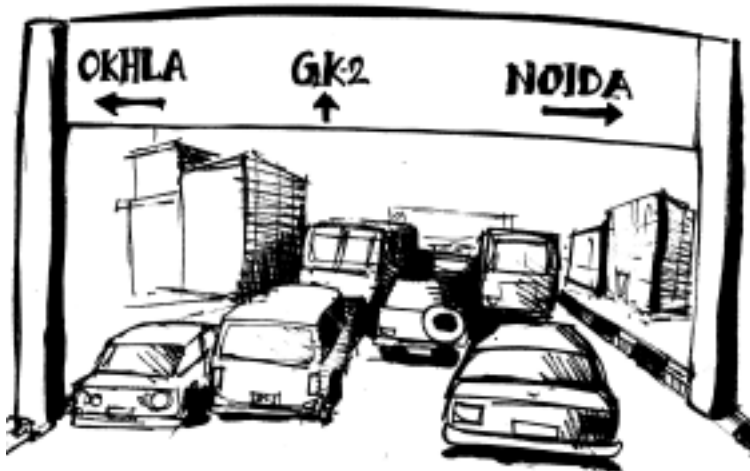


Fig. 19.1: Sign boards

Thus in public relations, we can say that the process of communication involves the following three progressive levels:-

AWARENESS - The message should reach the public.

ACCEPTANCE - The public should agree with the message.

ACTION - The public should act or interact accordingly.

To understand this, let us take the example of a television advertisement on a new brand of washing powder. Some of the viewers are found to be convinced about the quality of the new product. So they take a decision to buy the product and try it out.



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We can simplify this further to say that :

Public relations is the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you.

For example, while you are shopping, your manner towards the sales persons and the way they respond to you can make the difference between an actual sale happening or not.

Similarly, while appearing for an interview, the first and most important impression that you give is made on entering the room, through how you look, your dress, your manner, your attitude and how you speak.



Activity 19.1

While taking a walk in the evening, go to your nearest supermarket and find out if any public relations activity has been launched to sell a product. Write a few lines about your observations and experience.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 19.1

1. Fill in the blanks with the most appropriate word from those given in brackets:
 - i) _____ and public relations are linked to each other. (advertising, communication, television)
 - ii) Public relations is a _____ controlled phenomenon. (sender, receiver, message)
 - iii) The most important aspect of public relations is to focus on the _____. (product, public, service)
 - iv) Public relations is a _____ way communication process between an organistaion and its public. (one, two, three)
 - v) The target group that a political meeting has to focus on are the _____. (counsumers, patients, voters)
2. Define the term ' public relations'.

19.2 EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN INDIA

Now let us see how public relations evolved in India.

You must have read stories about kings who went around in disguise to see for themselves what the people felt about their administration. The Arabian tales relate how the celebrated Sultan Haroon-Al-Rashid used to wander about every night in disguise to see for himself as to what the people really felt about his administration.

Professional bards were invited to sing the glory of kings and queens.

There were people who reported to kings about popular feelings and views. In

the Ramayana there is a character called Bhadro who used to report to Rama about popular feelings and perceptions.

All these are examples of public relations which existed in one form or another in ancient India.

All our religious teachers from Gautama Buddha to Sankaracharya to Nanak and Kabir communicated in a language which the common people found easy to understand. They were all master communicators.

Another outstanding example of a master communicator is that of Mahatma Gandhi who succeeded in bringing the entire country together to achieve independence.

All of them preached in a language which was understood by the masses with a view to changing their mindset in a particular direction.

Spiritual leaders like Baba Ramdev and Sri Sri Ravishankar have also been successful in developing a huge mass base consisting of their followers by their simple and direct approach.

DID YOU KNOW?

King Ashoka sent his own children to Sri Lanka to spread the message of Buddhism. From his angle, his daughter Sanghamitra was the first woman public relations executive in history.

However, a systematic practice of public relations in India began with the INDIAN RAILWAYS in the 1920s. They utilized public relation activities such as exhibitions, festivals and advertising in newspapers, both in India and England, to attract tourists to India.

19.3 GOVERNMENT PUBLIC RELATIONS STRUCTURE

In a democracy like India, you will agree that popular support is required for the government to exist. The government therefore has to inform, motivate, change the attitude and finally seek support from the public to achieve its objectives.

Let us find out why it is essential for the government to keep the public informed about its plans and programmes and how this is achieved.

During the first World War (1914-1918), the Government of India set up a Central Publicity Board. This was the first organised PR/Information set-up of the Government of India. It was renamed as Central Bureau of Information, and afterwards renamed as Bureau of Public Information, and functioned as a link between the Government and the Press. One of the items on its agenda was to find out where the action of the Government was criticised. In today's parlance, we call it "feedback".

After Independence, in 1947, the Government of India set up the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, employing professionals to look after the function of public relations.



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Bards - musicians



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Now let us trace the broad sectors of this Ministry

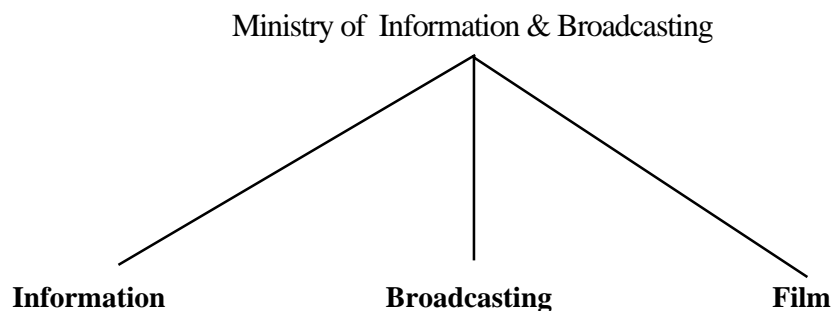


Fig. 19.2

You must also know that there are specialised units in this Ministry which handle the public information of the government of India. They are called ‘media units’ and inform people about the plans and programmes of the government.

- All India Radio (AIR)
- Doordarshan Kendra (DDK)
- Films Division (FD)
- Press Information Bureau (PIB)
- Registrar of Newspapers on India (RNI)
- National Film Archives of India (NFAI)
- Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC)
- Photo Division
- Film and Television Institute of India (FTII)
- National Film Development Corporation (NFDC)
- National Centre of Films for Children and Young Persons (NCFCYP)
- Directorate of Film Festivals
- Publications Division
- Directorate of Film Publicity
- Directorate of Audio-Visual Publicity
- Song and Drama Division
- Research and Reference Division

You must understand that the above media units specialize in the use of a particular means of communication to convey information to the public.

To achieve this, a wide variety of media like the press, advertisements, performing arts, group discussions, books, television, radio and films are used.



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A look at the chart given below will tell you about the type of mass medium used by each of the above media units for their functions.

<i>Media Unit</i>	<i>Mass medium used</i>
1. AIR	radio
2. DDK	television
3. FD	film
4. PIB	print
5. RNFI	print
6. NFAI	film
7. Photo Division	photographs
8. NFDC	film
9. NCFCYP	films
10. DFF	films
11. Publications Division	print
12. Directorate of Field Publicity	film, out door media
13. DAVP	print, radio, television, outdoor media, exhibitions
14. Song and Drama Division	drama, folk songs, ballets

Details about some of the government media units are given below: -

a) PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU (PIB):

As the name suggests, this organization gives official information to the press on the print media. The officials of this media unit regularly issue press releases on various activities/developments and news regarding a particular department. Every ministry has a separate information officer who provides information to the PIB. The head of PIB, the Principal Information Officer (PIO) is the official spokesperson of the Government of India.

b) DIRECTORATE OF ADVERTISING AND VISUAL PUBLICITY (DAVP):

The DAVP is responsible for all media publicity and campaigns for the Central Government. It also releases advertisements to various media like newspapers, magazines, radio and television for central ministries and departments.

c) PHOTO DIVISION:

The job of the Photo Division is to take photographs on various aspects of the government and make these available to the media. For example, if anyone wants an official photograph of the President, the Photo Division provides this.

d) FIELD PUBLICITY UNIT:

Publicity of various government programmes and projects is provided by the



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Field Publicity Unit. They organize exhibitions and melas and also bring out other publicity material.

e) SONG AND DRAMA DIVISION:

Making use of music, drama and folk/traditional media, this unit gives publicity to various government programmes. There are performing artists who carry out these activities in all parts of the country.

f) FILMS DIVISION:

This division makes publicity films of the government. It also brings out newsreels for exhibition in commercial cinema halls across the country in different languages.

g) RESEARCH & REFERENCE WING:

This wing provides supporting material to various ministries based on research.

EXTERNAL PUBLIC DIVISION

The Ministry of External Affairs has a separate unit to handle media and publicity, with an official spokesperson. This division is popularly known as the XP Division.



Activity 19.2

Make a list of advertisements appearing in any newspaper and find out how many of these have been released by the government over a period of one week.

As we have seen in the case of the Central Government, every state government has a public relations department which disseminates information to their public through their media units. However, the structure is less complex and need based..

Each State has a Directorate of Information and Public Relations which carries out its functions with the help of Field Publicity Officers.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 19.2

1. Give two examples of public relations which existed in ancient India.
2. Name any five media units of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and indicate the type of mass medium used by them.

Media Unit

Mass Medium

- i)
- ii)
- iii)
- iv)
- v)

19.4 TYPES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

You have studied in the earlier section that public relations is a multi-faceted activity involving different organisations and different publics.

But what is the purpose of public relations in these activities? Let us list them.

- i) to educate certain audiences on the advantages of a product
- ii) to promote goodwill for the organisation
- iii) to create, maintain, protect and build the reputation of the organisation

Now let us study some of the specific areas of public relations.

PRODUCT PUBLIC RELATIONS

When you go to the market, you must have come across new products such as soaps, shampoos, detergents displayed in an attractive manner in shops. You may have also noticed a salesman or saleswoman describing the advantages of new products in the market.

What do you understand from all this?

These are public relations exercises to launch or introduce new products and encourage people to buy them by:

- i) creating an awareness about their existence
- ii) by differentiating them from similar products in the market.

This is often done by giving samples of the product for use by consumers or by offering a discount on the product. Have you ever been offered samples of products by salespersons?



Fig. 19.3: Product demonstration



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Similarly, consumers can be reminded about the existing products in the market, such as a particular brand of tea or coffee powder

In product public relations, the following methods are used to launch or promote products:

- i) organizing special events
- ii) exhibitions
- iii) window display
- iv) media events such as press conferences
- v) distributing printed material such as pamphlets and brochures

You will learn about some of these methods in the next lesson.



Fig. 19.4: Window display

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

You have learnt that employees are one of the most important publics of a company. It is therefore important for any company to earn the goodwill of the employees and uphold its image and reputation among its employees.

How is this achieved?

This is done with the help of communication devices used to improve employer–employee relations.



Let us list some of them..

- newsletters giving vital information on the activities of the company
- bulletin boards displaying and appreciating the performance of employees
- organizing special events like picnics for employees and their families
- providing incentives, like cash prizes or gifts, for employees
- opportunities to continue education for employees and their family members

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL RELATIONS

Elections are held to choose representatives of people to run the government. This is done by a process of voting in which the people participate.

Let us see how public relations is utilized for political purposes to attract votes.

In order to gain the confidence of the people and persuade them for their votes, campaigns and meetings are organized.



Fig. 19.5: Political rally

You have seen public meetings being held in your locality where leaders talk about the achievements of their political party and encourage people to vote for them.

Posters and hoardings are erected at public places to attract the attention of the public.

rally : public meeting



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Fig. 19.6: Election poster

Several schemes are announced for the benefit of the public such as the sale of essential commodities like rice and wheat at affordable prices through the public distribution system, educational concessions for children etc.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Banks, big business houses and media organisations organize programmes for establishing good community relations. This is a form of public relations used by these organisations to gain the goodwill of the community in which they operate. Let us see what type of programmes are taken up by such organisations.

- maintaining well developed parks in residential areas
- cleaning and beautification drive involving the local community
- setting up charitable dispensaries
- sponsoring events such as cricket matches
- setting up public libraries
- raising funds in the case of natural calamities such as floods, earthquakes etc.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 19.3

1. Name any two methods/ communication devices used in the following types of public relations :
 - i) product public relations

- ii) employee relations
- iii) community relations



19.5 WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

→ Concept of Public relations

- definition
- PR a two way communication process
- Products/ services and public

Evolution of public relations in India

- public relations in ancient India
- public relations in modern times

Government public relations structure

- Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
- Media units

Types of public relations

- product relations
- employee relations
- government and political relations
- community relations



19.6 TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Describe the term 'public relations' with adequate examples.
2. Explain the following:
 - i) evolution of public relations in India
 - ii) structure of the government public relations structure
3. Write short notes on the following:
 - i) product relations
 - ii) employee elations
 - iii) community relations
 - iv) government and political relations



**Notes****19.7 ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS**

- 19.1** 1. i) communication ii) receiver iii) public iv) two v) voters
2. Refer to Section 19.1
- 19.2** 1. Refer to Section 19.2
2. Refer to Section 19.3
- 19.3** 1. Refer to Section 19.4