NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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COURSE TITLE: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

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Course Title   Principles and Practice of Public Relations

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

Like most subjects or disciplines, public relations has as many definitions as there are authors and practitioners in the field. These authors and practitioners offer varying definitions based on their knowledge, experience and practices perspectives. However, as we examine these definitions, you will observe points of similarities and unanimity in them.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

    Accurately restate at least two definitions of public relations.
    Explain the terms or ideas that are common in these definitions.
    Offer your own definition.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Defining Public Relations

The British Institute of Public relations (BIPR) defines public relations as 'the deliberate planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics." This definition suggests that public relations is the creation or establishment of mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics. It also suggests that public relations is not a haphazard process. It must be consciously designed. Planning calls for attention, deliberation, research, anticipation, analysis and consequences.

 Public relations efforts must ensure that not only does the organisation understand its publics, the publics must equally understand the organisation. It must understand its reasons for whatever actions it takes. As a public relations officer or manager of your firm, for instance, it is your duty to ensure that mutual understanding is achieved between your firm and its several publics. More often than not, the publics are passive at performing this role. Therefore, your organisation must take proactive steps towards achieving it.

'Sustained effort' means that it is not enough to start the plan; it must be carried through to a logical end. This is not usually very easy in the face of a precarious economy, political instability and other factors.

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) says "public relations is concerned with or devoted to creating mutual understanding among groups and institutions." The PRSA recognises the place of groups and institutions in the public relations process. It admits that these entities have interests that must be protected. It also presupposes a streamlining of these benefits for mutual good. The concept of mutuality in this definition makes you as a public relations man or woman an intermediary between your organisation and its publics. This implies that you should be able to align the interests of these two parties for their mutual advantage. You do this by convincing your organisation that public relations attempts to put the broad interest of the public first before the special interest of the organisation. By doing this, the organisation is indirectly serving its own interest; hence PR has what is called "enlightened self interest".

Another definition is that given Cutlip, Center and Broom, in their book **Effective Public Relations** which is considered the bible of public relations in America. According to them, public relations is the "management function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its publics upon whom its success depends." Now, take note of the last part of the definition, 'upon whom its success depends,' because this is one fact

that very many organisations have not realised. A company's success or failure depends considerably on its relationship with its various publics. We shall see these publics in another module.

Let us take two more definitions. Frank Jefkins, a British author, in his book *Public Relation,* says "public relations consists of all forms of planned communication both inward and outward between an organisation and its publics for the purpose of achieving objectives concerning mutual understanding." Jefkins' definition includes a term common to many other definitions of PR: **mutual understanding**. Mutual understanding is a very broad concept which every organisation must seek to establish. 'Inward and outward communication' implies a two-way communication involving both the organisation and its various publics.

Our last definition is the one often referred to as the Mexican statement. This definition was adopted at the first World Congress of National Public Relations Associations, held in Mexico in 1978. It states " Public Relations is the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisational leaders as well as planning and implementing a programme of action that will serve the interest of not only the organisation but also that of its publics." You will agree that this definition is broad, multidisciplinary and all-embracing. It suggests that public relations borrows knowledge and expertise from other fields, like psychology, politics, sociology, languages, etc.

Public relations is an art because it involves artistic skills, fine arts, language, writing, public speaking, etc. It is a social science because it uses social scientific instruments to understand and predict human behaviour. It attempts to understand its environment and relates with it mutually. Public relations monitors, surveys and researches issues and happenings in the environment. It advises the organisation so that the policies of the organisation are in line with the expectations of its publics. It implements programmes that will favour both the organisation and the publics in a win-win outcome.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Write down three points common to the definitions of PR presented in this unit. Ask two or more of your colleagues to do the same; then, discuss your points in terms of their similarities and differences.

3.2   Components of Public Relations

Public relations has divergent parts. According to the Public Relations Society of America, the components of public relations include the following:

Counselling: Providing advice to management concerning policies, relationships, and communication with its various publics.

Research: Determining attitudes and behaviours of publics through research in order to plan public relations strategies. Such research can be used to (1) generate mutual understanding or (2) influence and persuade publics.

Media Relations: Working with the mass media in seeking publicity or responding to their interest in the organisation.

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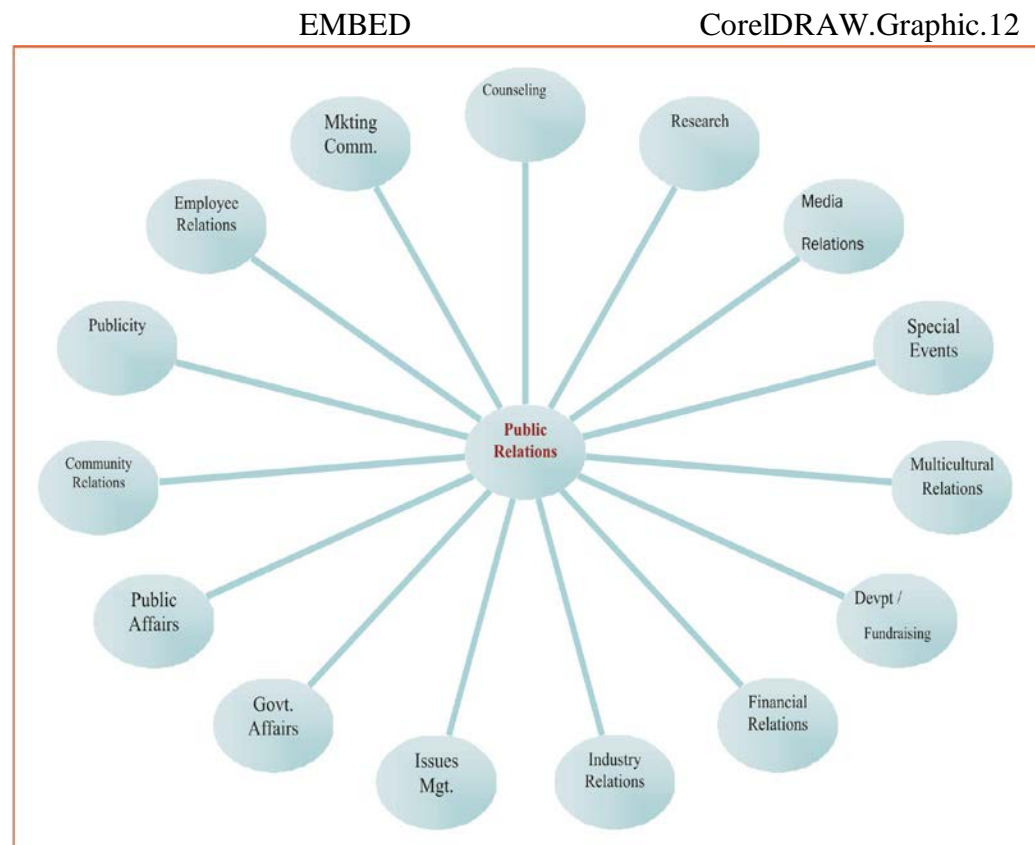
Figure 1: Components of Public Relations

Publicity: Disseminating planned messages through selected media to further the organisation's interest.

Employee/Member Relations: Responding to concerns, informing, and motivating and organisation's employees or association or club members.

Community Relations: Planned activity with a community to maintain an environment that benefits both the organisation and the community.

Public Affairs: Developing effective involvement in public policy and helping an organization adapt to public expectations. The term is also used by government agencies to describe their public relations activities and by many corporations as an umbrella term to describe multiple public relations activities.

Governmental Affairs: Relating directly with legislature and regulatory agencies on behalf of the organisation. Lobbying can be part of the government affairs programme.

Issues management: Identifying and addressing issues of public concern that affect the organisation.

Financial Relations: Also known as Investor Relations or Shareholder Relations. It involves creating and maintaining investor confidence and building good relationships with the financial community.

Industry Relations: Relating with other firms in the industry of an organization and with trade associations.

Development/Fund-Raising: Demonstrating the need for and encouraging the public to support an organisation, primarily through financial contributions.

Multicultural Relations/ Workplace Diversity: Relating with individuals and groups in various cultural settings.

Special Events: Stimulating an interest in a person, product, or organisation by means of a focused "happening". They are activities designed to interact with publics and listen to them.

Marketing Communications: Combination of activities designed to sell a product, service, or idea. These activities may include advertising, collateral materials, publicity, promotion, direct mail, trade shows, and special events.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1.   Distinguish the assertion: "public relations is a very complex activity."
2.   Distinguish 'media relations' from 'publicity' and 'public affairs' from 'community relations.'

3.3   What Public Relations Is Not

One of the greatest problems which public relations practitioners in Nigeria have had to grapple with over the year has been that of credibility stemming from society's wrong perception of what a public relations person actually does. Worse still is the fact that lots of practitioners themselves do not have a clear idea of what public relations actually is. For this reason, many come into the profession with the wrong motives, intentions and perceptions. Ikechukwu Nwosu (1997) identified some of these misconceptions, thus:

1.   Public relations is not about lying and selling falsehood about your product and organisation. It is not about denying every statement that does not favour your organisation. It is not about prevarication. Public relations is about telling the truth all the time.

2.   Public relations is not about bribery. This wrong idea about public relations came to the fore recently when a Nigerian minister of education excused his action of bribing the executive arm of government to increase his ministries budget allocation as public relations. According to him, the bribe was 'PR'. The truth is that public relations is not bribe giving.

3.   Public relations is based on moral principles and as such it is not 'arranging' pretty ladies for international visitors to government houses or to chief executives of companies, clients, board members, etc. If there is any profession where morality should be held in high regards, it is in public relations because it enhances public confidence in the profession.

4.   Public relations is not magic, enchantment or paranormal. For this reason all its activities are based on scientifically provable and empirical methods. Public relations is based on high performance, quality performance, quality and credibility in terms of products, service, policies and practice.

5.   Public relations is not about organising parties and other social events. No doubt, public relations does activities of this nature, but not in the sense of making it its only preoccupation.

6.   Public relations is not about employing pretty ladies lacking in morals and principles to woo men into acting against their wishes.

7.   Public relations is not about being a yes-boy or a bag carrier for your boss' madam or relations. Rather it is a dignified and noble

profession that attracts self confident, intelligent and self-respecting men and women.

4.0   CONCLUSION

Public relations is a discipline that has attracted many definitions, but the numerous definitions have a lot in common. A major point of agreement is that public relations involves creating mutual understanding between organisations and their publics. As an activity, PR is very complex, indeed it has many components.

5.0   SUMMARY

What have we learnt in this unit? We have learnt that public relations has as many definitions as there are practitioners and academics in the field. But they all agree in their definitions that public relations aims at creating mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics. Public relations has various components which include counselling, research, media relations, publicity, government affairs, financial relations, community relations, etc.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Explain four terms or concepts that are common to two or more of the four definitions of PR in this unit.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2   FUNCTIONS AND CAREERS OF PUBLIC
           RELATIONS

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1.0   Introduction
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       3.1   Areas of Work of Public Relations Practitioners
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1.0   INTRODUCTION

Public relations involves a diversity of functions. The people who do the
work of public relations, that is PR practitioners, do different kinds of
work, and they are a multitude indeed. Nevertheless, these functions are
interrelated and are directed towards the achievement of a singular goal:
the creation of mutual understanding between organisations and their
publics.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

        List and explain the functions of a public relations practitioners
        State the knowledge, abilities and skills required to perform the
        functions.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Areas of Work of Public Relations Practitioners

The work of public relations may be divided into many areas or
functions.   Fundamentally, public relations practitioners perform the
following functions:

Writing and editing: Writing is a very vital skill in public relations.
Therefore you must learn not only to appreciate good writing but must
also be able to write well. The beauty about writing is that it is a skill
that can be learned. Good writers are in high demand in most agencies.

Mass Production: Practitioners of public relations engage in the writing
of various messages for the purpose of communicating with both

internal and external publics. This is why the skill of writing is vital to public relations. Some of the messages that PR practitioners write are packaged as magazines and other forms of publications, which require editing and production.

Media relations: The mass media in both print and electronic are the channels through which public relations practitioners communicate with the public. This is why PR practitioners need to need to cultivate and maintain good relations with mass media organisations and other personnel, especially editors, reporters and columnists.

Research: Public relations problems are not solved by guess work. PR practitioners carry out formal research h to obtain information that is vital to planning.

Strategic planning: Public relations practitioners who operate at the top level participate in the formulation of organisational missions, policies and goals. .

Management and administration: Public relations practitioners engage in management work. Public relations is a distinct management function which helps to maintain mutual lines of communication between an organisation and its publics. PR practitioners manage people, businesses, and events.

Corporate counselling: Public relations practitioners advise management on matters concerning their organisations' relationships with their various publics.

Organising special events: The organisation of events, such as trade fairs, trade exhibitions, `press conferences, fashion shows, factory tours, special observances (e.g. mothers' day) AGMs, etc is part of work public relations practitioners do.

Speaking: To represent their organisations, PR practitioners do engage in speaking assignments of different kinds for different publics. For example, your organisation may be invited by students who are studying a subject that underlies the work of your organisation to give a public lecture during their career day.

Coaching: PR practitioners also engage in training and coaching top management staff on public speaking and press interviews.

Crisis Communication: A very special type of work that PR practitioners do is helping their organisations to resolve crises whenever they occur. They do this essentially by managing the flow of

information between the organisation and the public, via the mass media, and by advising management on what to do and how to do it, so that the crisis is not aggravated. To practice preventive public relations, it's necessary to plan extensively to avoid crisis, but since crisis must occur, it is your duty to counsel management in crisis situations.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

Which five functions of public relations would you say are the most critical, and why?

4.0   CONCLUSION

When you see how much the field of public relations has been bastardized by charlatans in recent times, you will agree with me that the subjects of this unit are quite necessary in order for you at this early stage to appreciate the fact that public relations is practiced by persons with high and lofty ideals.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, we saw that public relations involves commitment to some key areas of corporate work which include ensuring that the corporation acts in the interest of its publics. That it protects and enhances the company's reputation, maintains openness and integrity. We also saw the knowledge, skills, and abilities you are expected to have to do well on your job as a public relations person. Lastly, we saw that public relations is not about pulling the wool over people's eyes or being a yes-man in the name of ensuring a good name.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the job demands of a public relations practitioner.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 3   PUBLIC   RELATIONS   AND   RELATED CONCEPTS

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

PR goes with a lot of related concepts. Some of which are often misused and confused by the audience, even those in communication. A discussion of these related concepts will give you a good insight into what public relations entails. It is necessary to mention that your thorough knowledge of these concepts will assist you greatly in understanding the functions the PR practitioners perform.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Define related concepts in public relations, such as publicity, press agency, lobbying, merchandizing etc.
Differentiate between these related concepts
Outline the types of functions involved in public relations e.g. informative service, product publicity, investor relations etc.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Public Relations and Related Concepts

So far, we have succeeded in defining public relations, but we must go a little further by explaining the relationships that subsist between public relations and similar or related concepts. The nature of public relations is quite broad and as such it includes a wide range of activities which are sometimes confused as public relations rather than elements of public relations. We shall take a look at some of these concepts and attempt an explanation of the differences and similarities between them and public relations.

Publicity: This refers to any attempt designed to expose an organisation, its services or product to the public through any public media. It includes advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, etc. However in a technical sense, it is more limited and defined, so that it means free publicity which is provided essentially by the press. It is the practice of placing newsworthy and factual information written in a journalistic and editorial format published in the news media at no cost. An example of publicity is a situation where a company issues a news release about a new product or new functions of an existing product. Should Nigeria produce its first air plane for instance, it will be given wide, free publicity.

Press Agency: Unlike a news agency, a press agency deals with staging newsworthy events that are designed to attract the attention of the public by publicising them in the media. Such events include press conferences, trade exhibitions, fashion shows, etc. These must be distinguished from events that happen daily. They are rather pseudo-events because they are stage-managed for the purpose of being reported by the media.

Lobbying: This is one of the most abused expressions in common usage. In a technical sense, lobbying is a professional attempt designed to influence the government or any authority to change a public programme or policy in favour of an organisation, a cause, a group, an event e.g. organising a petition drive against a cause, e.g. open letters in daily newspapers or magazines. Dry cell manufacturers in Nigeria did this a few years ago to draw government attention to the unbridled importation of dry cell batteries. Lobbying is a legal thing when it has points, information and logical reasons.

Merchandising: This deals with blending an acceptable appearance. It is part of promotion. You blend the product or person with the real it or him, so as to win acceptance and patronage from public for a group, a product, service, cause or an idea e.g. the grooming of a positive image by a politician who acts, dresses and speaks like a real native even though he is from somewhere else, e.g. during political campaigns when politicians dress like the native people he is going to speak to. In commercial merchandising, most products are designed to convey messages by their packs. You know that normally people do not patronize badly packaged products.

Promotion: This involves moulding or mobilising opinion favourably to an organization to get it to support a worthy cause, e.g. the mounting of events or fund raising programmes for motherless babies' homes.

Personal Selling: This talks about a personal effort involving a person who is attempting to woo other people on behalf of a product, a group, an idea, etc, e.g. religious crusaders who go from door to door. There are two types of personal sellers namely: order-takers and order-getters.

Human Relations: Human relations deals with an individual's ability to develop and maintain a personality type as well as image that is capable of successful and spontaneous interpersonal relationship with other people. Human relations is relating well with others. It talks about manners and character. Good human relations is the basis of good public relations.

Persuasion: It is a fundamental assumption in public relations that effective public relations is persuasive, not intimidating or forcing. Persuasion is any mass communication effort designed to change public opinion, believe, attitudes as well as action.

Communication: This is a process of sharing ideas with other people. In a professional sense, it is a means of sending information from one person to another. Public relations in all its forms embraces communication in one form or the other.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

List three other concepts which we have not discussed above and discuss them with your colleagues.

3.2   Jobs in Public Relations

If you have chosen to take public relations as a career, you probably know what I know: that it is a field with great job prospects, especially in the world of today. Today's corporate world has become very competitive in every sense. Every organisation goes the extra mile to keep its various publics by creating and maintaining mutually cordial relationships with them. Since public relations has equally become scientific and technology-based, it is hazardous for any firm not to hire appropriately qualified personnel to man its public relations office. Aside from working for a firm however, there are other options of employment for a good public relations person. The Public Relations Society of America outlined the following as the activities an average public relations personnel does.

Information Service

Part of building a company's reputation is the role of supplying information to a variety of publics. Companies send news releases to the

media in order to inform the public about earnings, acquisitions, new products and the like (media relations). Companies must respond to inquiries from customers, distributors, government officials and community residents.

Product Publicity

Introduction of new products, and campaigns to put fresh life into the sale of established products, are important functions in what is broadly called marketing communications. PR practitioners work closely with the marketing department to develop product publicity that reinforces advertising and promotion campaigns. Product recall is the negative side of product publicity.

Investor Relations

Also referred to as stockholder communications, investor relations is a means for providing information to individuals who own stock or have a special interest in the corporation. Elaborate annual reports, quarterly reports mailed with dividend checks and other printed materials are sent to stockholders on a regular basis. Staff members may have to convince stockholders that an acquisition or merger is in their best interest.

Financial Relations

A parallel function to investor relations is to provide extensive information to the financial community including security analysts at brokerage houses, large banks and similar institutions, and to weigh the information and make judgments on a company's financial strength and prospects. On the basis of their recommendations, institutional investors and brokerage firms buy or sell a company's stock. A thorough knowledge of finance, as well as Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) rules, is essential for a public relations person specializing in financial relations.

Community Relations

A company is a vital part of a community and as such has obligations to that community through various kinds of support including encouraging employees to do volunteer work, providing a grant to the local orchestra or art museum, donating needed equipment to local schools or hospitals and so on. Good community relations include efforts to improve the quality of life in the community.

Employee Relations

In any organisation, there must be a good communication "flow" between management and employees and employees and management. The public relations department often works closely with personnel or human resources to achieve good employee relations through publication of an employee newsletter, magazine, newspaper, or video news magazine, the writing of brochures to explain company policies and benefits, preparation of audio-visual materials for training and policy-transmission purposes, the scheduling of staff meetings and seminars, the training of speakers among managers and supervisors who serve as communicators to employees, and coordination of employee productivity or energy conservation campaigns.

Special Events Management

Public relations personnel are responsible for the planning and implementation of special events including sponsorship of the games, of civic or cultural events and festivals.

Public Affairs

The actions of government on the local, state, and national level have major effects on how companies conduct their affairs. Thus, a number of PR people work in an area often referred to as governmental relations. In this role, public affairs executives seek to influence legislation through contact with legislators and governmental regulatory agencies. A public affairs manager must be "concerned with the management function covering the relationship between the organisation and its external environment and involving key tasks of intelligence gathering and analysis, external action programmes directed at government, communities and the general public as well as strategic issue management and internal communications." A lobbyist has a narrower function "concerned with direct or indirect means of exercising influence on passage or defeat of legislative bills or regulatory actions, and to influence their outcomes."

Issues Management

Issues management is the management process of determining how various public issues will affect a company. The manager must identify the issue, analyse it, ascertain options open to the company, initiate a plan of action and evaluate the results (e.g., How would a company handle investments in the Republic of South Africa? How would a company handle environmental legislation impacting specific manufacturing processes?).

Trade Associations

Trade associations are generally comprised of member companies that produce the same type of product or provide similar services. The association works to promote or oppose legislation, informs the public about the industry, and undertakes statistical and other types of research for the benefit of its members. Examples include: Manufacturers Association of Nigeria, National, Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria.

Labour Unions

Labour unions must use public relations extensively to inform members about pension plans, insurance programs, and contract negotiations to name a few tasks. In addition, labour unions participate actively in politics from the federal to the local level by endorsing and financing candidates and taking positions on political issues.

Professional Societies

Like the Nigerian Medical Association, the Nigerian Dental Association, the Nigerian Bar Association, work as professional societies to support legislative campaigns, advocate professional standards, publish information at both the skilled professional and general readership levels, recruit membership, and generally work to strengthen the profession's stature in the public mind.

Government or Military Relations

Government or military offices personnel work as public relations practitioners although they are most commonly referred to as public information officers (specialists) or public affairs officers (specialists).

Sports Information and Entertainment Publicists

These work basically as press agents to promote the personalities and careers of movie stars, musicians, rock bands, athletes, politicians, authors and so on. Professional sports teams have a public relations specialist. Many university sports teams or athletic departments have public relations specialists in most developed countries. Generally, professionals in the sports industry are referred to as promotions directors or managers.

Educational Public Relations

Public relations plays a vital part in almost every educational institution. Fund raising is an important part of educational public relations. In urban areas, elementary and high school districts frequently employ public relations officers to assist the news media and to work with parents and school groups. Collegiate public relations practitioners may distribute news releases containing information about campus events and personalities, prepare periodicals, brochures and catalogues, maintain ties with alumni, maintain relations with local, state and federal government officials, recruit students, maintain internal relations with faculty, staff and students, solicit donations from foundations, alumni, federal and state governments and special interest groups (a serious task in private institutions).

Generally, however there are five major areas where public relations experts usually work which are:

1. Corporations
2. Non profit organizations and Trade Associations
3. Governments- State, Federal, Local
4. Public Relations Agencies
5. Independent Consulting Firms

It is important to note that working in any of these public relations job areas entails same general skills but there are very wide differences in terms of job demands, challenges and complexities.

Corporations: Corporations refer to organizations that produce goods and services with a strong motive for profit. In today's world, corporations do not only offer most of the jobs in public relations, but they equally offer the greatest variety of jobs. Can you think of the reasons for this? Some common corporations in Nigeria include: Nigeria Bottling Company (NBL), Unilever Nigeria, NICON Insurance, First Bank, etc. In most corporations, public relations jobs focus on specific publics. Indeed, several big corporations create different sub departments for their various publics, thus you have employee relations, media relations, government relations, community relations consumer relations, etc. If the corporation is a public limited liability company, it could have a financial relations department otherwise known as investor relations department. Each of these departments is usually headed by a public relations personnel who is an expert in a given sub-field. Their duties would include research as well as advising the organisation's management. They also plan, execute and evaluate communication programmes. It is important to look at specific job demands in each of these areas.

Governments: Government Departments at Federal, state, and local levels also employ public relations personnel. If you get a job in any of these places, you would be called by such titles as press secretary, public information officer, public affairs officer, etc. Your job would involve writing news releases and position papers, speaking with reporters, speech writing and press briefing. You may equally ply your trade with political parties. Your duties will include all the above and voter relations and media relations.

Public Relations Agencies: There are lots of challenges and opportunities for growth and development if you work in a public relations agency. The work is enormous because companies that have in-house public relations departments and those who do not would at one time or the other require the services of an independent public relations organisation. Thus, agencies handle public relations activities of other organisations, corporations, non-profit set ups, governments and even individuals. For instance, some corporations may hire your agency to handle its annual report to stockbrokers or its overseas investors. You could be hired to partner with other agencies or bodies or even the public relations department of a corporation to do research, planning, communication and evaluation..

Just as it is in advertising agencies, staff of public relations agencies are often assigned to accounts. Usually, an account would include all the public relations activities planned for one particular client. Accounts are managed by account executives. It would be their job to research into the public relations problems, write messages, and decide on media and placement. They equally do evaluation of such campaigns. It is now very common to have public relations staff specialising in various areas of an account. Some are experts in message designing, media planning and placement, while others focus on research. In some cases, a staff could take up more responsibilities than one.

Public relations agencies vary in size. There are some that work as a small part of big advertising agencies while others are full-fledged, full-blown agencies, yet others are one room agencies. Known public relations agencies in Nigeria are Progan Promotions, Lagos, Trucontact, Lagos.

Independent Public relations Consultants: You may equally which to ply you trade as a one man public relations consultant. Successful public relations consultants are often persons with broad experience having worked in a few agencies and handled several successful accounts. They are a one-man agency. Very often they specialise in small areas of public relations like crisis communication, speech writing, international public relations, etc. In the words of Guth and Marsh (2000) 'The main

appeal of independent consulting is also is biggest burden. The consultant alone bears the responsibility for success or failure.

4.0   CONCLUSION

It was necessary to look at the elements that make up public relations as we did in this unit in order to be sure from the start of your career what you are really going to be doing. We must note however that public relations is a growing area of knowledge. It is expanding with new vista by the day as more people and events shape it to fit into a more challenging future.

5.0   SUMMARY

The focus of this unit was to make clear some essential elements of public relations. We also saw the relationship of public relations with such concepts as publicity, press agency, lobbying, merchandising, promotion, personal selling, human relations, etc. We observed that each of these concepts is related directly or indirectly with public relations but it is not exactly public relations. We also examined the job descriptions of public relations professionals. Among these jobs are: information service, product publicity, investor relations, media relations, etc.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Attempt an in-depth description of the relationship that subsist between public relations and other related concepts.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 4   PUBLIC RELATIONS PUBLICS

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In unit one of this module, we saw several definitions of public relations. We learnt that the success of any organisation depends on its relationship with its publics. In this unit, we shall identify the various publics with whom your organisation relates. We shall also see best approaches to relating with these publics.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

        Identify the various publics of your organisation
        Show how best to relate with your publics

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Public Relations Publics

Let's begin this lesson by going back to the start of this module when we attempted to define public relations. There we saw some definitions that suggested that public relations aims to create mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics upon whom its success depends. This tells us that we cannot talk about public relations without reference to publics. It also reminds us that every public relations effort is aimed at a specific public per time. A public is any group whose members have a common interest or common values in a particular situation. Publics differ from one organisation to another and the publics of one organisation may not be the publics of another organisation. Therefore you have to help your organisation to identify its publics.

We shall study the categorisation of public relations publics from two points of view. First, we look at the Wragg (1993) categorisation and later the Guth and Marsh (2000) categorisation.

According to Wragg (1993), public relations publics or audiences can be divided into four categories which include:

1. **Functional Publics**: They are those publics which enable the organisation to perform its chosen tasks. These include its customers, consumers, business firms with which it relates, employees, trade unions which represent it in its given line of trade or business, suppliers of raw materials and components.

2. **Enabling Publics**: These are publics which permit the organisation to function within the framework of the society to which it belongs. Such publics include regulatory bodies (e.g. the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations, Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria, National Broadcasting Commission, etc.), community leaders, politicians and shareholders.

3. **Diffused Publics:** Within this group are media organisations, pressure groups and local residents. These are varied audiences and often, especially in the case of the media and pressure groups are avenues to other major audiences.

4. **Normative Publics:** This term refers to trade associations and professional bodies, but it could also include political parties.

Among the four categorisations, the functional publics are usually closest to the organisation and may exhibit the highest level of interaction.

It is clear from the above that some of these classifications overlap, since in some situations political parties, pressure groups and politicians can include many of the same people and they might equally be consumers or employees. But the reason for this is not far-fetched because public relations is a dynamic field in a capricious world. This poses a challenge to you as a public relations practitioner in implementing a campaign for your organisation. For example if you were a public relations man for an airline you would have your customers as your functional publics, however, among them could be individuals who reside around the airport who are complaining about the noise of your planes through the formation of resident associations to exert pressure on your company to change its noisy planes. Some of them could be very influential politicians. Thus you can have your

publics streaming down into enabling publics, diffused publics and normative publics.

Guth and Marsh (2000) categorised public relations publics as follows:

1. Traditional and Non-traditional publics
2. Latent, Aware and Active publics
3. Intervening publics
4. Primary and Secondary publics
5. Internal and External publics
6. Domestic and International publics

Traditional Publics

Traditional publics refer to groups with which your organisation has ongoing, long term relationships. They include employees, the news media, governments, investors, customers, multicultural community groups, etc. These publics are always there, however, they must not be taken for granted as they can in one minute be allies and in another minute could be foes depending on how your organisation relates to them. For instance any organization that takes the mass media for granted will learn too soon that 'pen is mightier than sword.' Same goes for your employees. All it takes to bring down a manufacturing company is for an aggrieved employee to produce a contaminated version of a product and for such product to get to the market. This is especially dangerous where there are strong consumer associations.
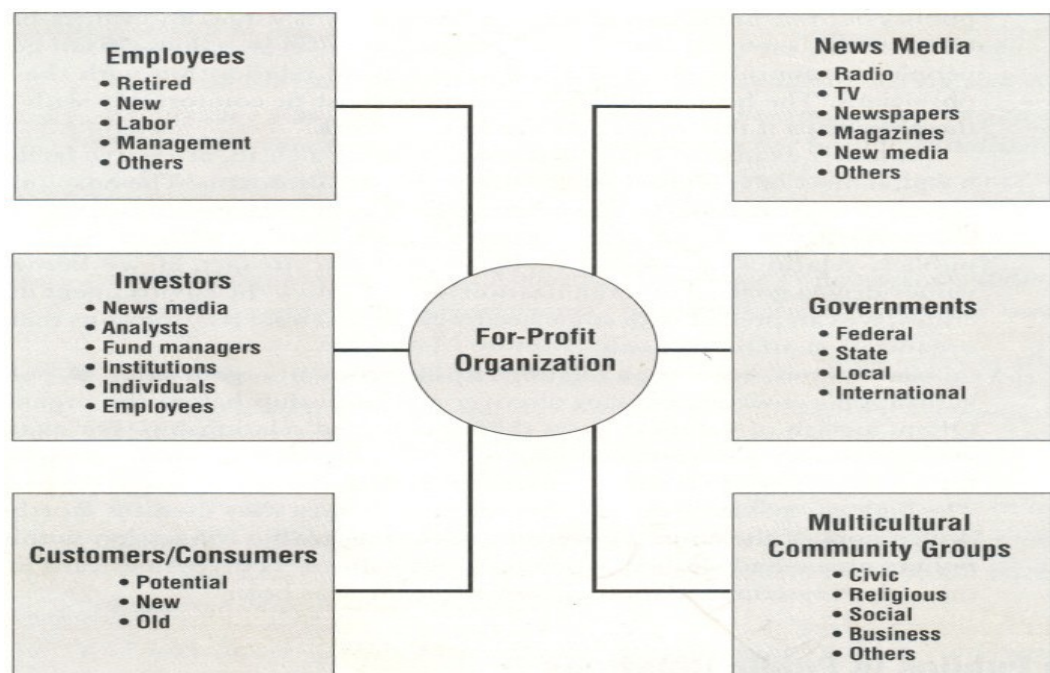

Fig. 2: Traditional Publics in Public Relations. Adapted from Guth and Marsh (2000)

Non-traditional publics

These are groups that usually are not familiar with your organisation; that is your organisation has not had an ongoing, long term relationship with them. Non-traditional publics immerge either due to changes in your organisation, the society or those publics themselves. They have always been there but not very relevant to your organisation but due to those changes, it could become imperative for them to form one of your publics. An example here would be ethnic militias in Nigeria who are seeking to be identified with by the government and corporations in their environment. For instance, oil companies in the Niger Delta area in Nigeria would want to look at such groups as MASSOP as new publics to relate with. Some traditional publics of some companies today were at some point non-traditional publics. After several years of relevance and interaction between an organization and its non-traditional publics, such publics could become traditional publics.

Latent, aware, and active publics

A latent public is one which, by evolving developments, common grounds of relationship is opening up between it and your organization, but whose members are yet to realize or explore it. There is no active relationship between both parties presently. The members of that public are not yet aware of the existence of the relationship. An aware public is that whose members are aware of the existence of a commonality of values or interest with your organization, but have not made any organised effort to respond to such relationship.
On the other hand, an active public has realised the relationship between itself and your organisation, and is working to manage that relationship on its own terms. Several publics at the evolving stages of their relationship with organizations would usually find themselves at one of these levels of relationships.

Intervening publics

Any public that helps you to send a message to another public is known as intervening public. Naturally the mass media fall into this group. Without the media, there is very little any organisation can achieve in its relationship with other publics.

Primary and secondary publics

You could also divide public relations publics into primary and secondary publics depending on the extent to which they affect your organisation's pursuit of its goals. If a public can directly affect your organisation's goals so that you have to take them into consideration

virtually on all PR matters, then that public is definitely a primary public. Here, you have such publics as your employees, your immediate community, the media, the government, the shareholders (if your company is quoted on the stock exchange), the financial institutions from which you obtain loans and through which you pay salaries. Primary publics are of great importance to any organisation.

Secondary publics are equally important and you must strive to have a good relationship with them. However, the degree to which they affect your organisation's pursuit of its goals is minimal. In a world of limited resources in relation to time and money, most companies concentrate on building and managing relationships with primary publics. With abundance of resources, secondary publics could also get some attention.

Internal and External Publics

Internal publics exist within your organisation while external publics are outside. For a higher institution of learning for instance, some of its publics would include students, academic staff, non-academic staff, food vendors, etc., while external publics would include its immediate community, providers of social amenities like water and electricity, other institutions in its state or country of location, education ministry, Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board, embassies and high commissions.

Domestic and International publics

A final category of publics we shall look at are domestic and international publics. Domestic publics are those within your country. International public exist beyond your country's borders. More and more organisations are realising the place of international publics in their overall corporate success. It is important to note however that the fact that a public is close to you does not make it familiar to you. To court the close relationship of a company requires well thought out communication strategies. International public relations is not just about the specific group or persons that your organisation relates to in another country, it entails knowledge of such a country in such areas as culture, believe and value systems, taste and preferences, religion, business ethics, important holidays, weather, etc.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1.   For five named organisations in Nigeria, list the publics of each based on the categories of Wragg

2.   For five named organisations in Nigeria, list the publics of each based on the categories of Guth and Marsh

4.0   CONCLUSION

Answers to all the above seven questions and indeed several other related ones are not as easy to ferret out of your mind even if you are a public relations whiz kid. You need well planned research to collect the data needed to answer these questions. This will be the subject of discussion in a later unit.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, we saw that every organisation that is serious about public relations must identify its publics clearly. We observed that there are various publics among which are: traditional and non-traditional publics, latent publics, aware and active publics, intervening publics, primary and secondary publics, internal and external publics, domestic and international publics. The nature of business as well as organisational goals and objectives of your organisation would determine its kind of publics.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Part of the jobs of a good public relations man is to consistently collect relevant information about the various publics of the organisation for which he works. Outline and discuss some questions as enunciated by Guth and Marsh that you would ask in order to get the appropriate information about your publics

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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MODULE 2   EVOLUTION AND PROCESS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Unit 1   Origins and Pioneers of Public Relations
Unit 2   History and Development of Public Relations in Nigeria
Unit 3   Models of Public Relations
Unit 4   Models of Public Relations (The Melvin Sharpe's Model)
Unit 5   Research in Public Relations

UNIT 1   ORIGINS   AND   PIONEERS   OF   PUBLIC RELATIONS

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
       3.1 Origins of public relations
       3.2 Trends in the Development of Public Relations
       3.3 Pioneers of public relations
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

History is essential to a good understanding of any area of knowledge. In this unit, we shall take a brief look at the global history of public relation.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

       Describe how public relations have evolved.
       Explain the roles of Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays in the growth of public relations.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Origins of public relations

It is very safe to say that what we now refer to as public relations had actually been with us from the beginning of man's existence. Although the phrase "public relations" was invented in the twentieth century, the practice of public relations had been since the dawn of recorded history.

Edward Bernays, one of the seminal figures in modern public relations stated that 'the three main elements of public relations are practically as old as society: informing people, persuading people, or integrating people with people. Of course the means and methods of accomplishing these ends have changed as society has changed'.

For Bernays and other public relations historians, professional public relations has always moved with civilization. Society was crude at the start of its life, so was public relations. Primitive society ruled mainly through fear and intimidation; whereas more advanced cultures employed persuasion and debate. Public relations has equally followed this trend.

The force of public relations was visible in ancient Rome as evidenced in phrases like *Vox Populi, Vox Dei*, (the voice of the people is the voice of God); and *Ves Publicae* (public affairs).

The study of rhetoric in Athens is often seen as the beginning of public relations as a social science based on research, planning and two-way communication. The spread of Christianity in the middle ages could in modern sense be linked to the application of public relations technique. Before the development of communication and technology, the Christian faith was spread by missionaries using persuasion skills by the word of mouth.

With the invention of the movable type by Guttenberg in 1456, which heralded the use of mass communication technology, public relations was gradually pushed to the frontiers of modern civilization. In the 17th century, the Catholic Church established the *Congregalio Propaganda Fide*, the congregation for the propagation of faith. This was the origin of propaganda, a means at this time for spreading church doctrine.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Attempt a two-page write up on any other pioneer who contributed to the global development of public relations.

3.2   Trends Leading To the Development of Modern Public Relations

The end to the civil war in America and the transition from an agricultural to an industrial society are closely linked to the march towards modern public relations in the West. The industrial revolution and its attendant pains redefined the relationships among the governments, businesses and the people. This is often referred to as the progressive era which ran from the 1890s to the United States entrance into the World War I in 1917. The progressive era witnessed the birth of the mass media and modern public relations as natural outgrowths of the sweeping social change of that era. Through the use of the 'new media' at this time, organisations were able to communicate with groups essential to their success. We shall examine five social trends that have aided the development of modern public relations as outlined by Guth and Marsh.

The Growth of Institutions

The Industrial Revolution brought about the growth of big companies. This in turn led to the emergence of men who had a large chunk of the nation's money concentrated in their hands, (like J. P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, and John D. Rockefeller). However, the American system which was never disposed to a money-in-few-hands economy created laws that would spread these wealth among Americans. As businesses, government and labour grew, the need for effective communication also increased.

Expansion of Democracy

With the expansion of democracy, as evidenced in such developments as women's right to vote, and direct election of U.S Senators, civil rights movements, access of minorities to the political process, etc, there was the need for effective communication. Due to the increasing importance of persuasion and consensus, public relations became an integral part of the democratic process.

Technological Improvements in Communication

The revolutionary changes in communication in the 20th century contributed to the growth of public relations. Commercial radio had debuted in 1920 and commercial television in 1947. Developments in satellite and computer technology in the second half of the 20th century further revolutionized communications. The 1990s saw the dramatic expansion of the Internet. All of these led to the shifting of communication power from media companies to individuals.

The Growth of Advocacy

The last two centuries have witnessed a surge in social advocacy. Movements for women's rights, civil rights, multinationalism, rights for persons with disabilities, children's rights, gay rights, etc, have led to an increasing use of public relations.

The Search for Consensus

The first and second world wars left several mistrust among nations of the world. With the collapse of communism and the realization by nations of the need for mutual interdependence, and the emergence of the global economy, public relations has become a handy means of increasing growth and consensus.

3.3   Pioneers of Public Relations

We cannot discuss the growth of public relations at the global level without a mention of persons who have played prominent roles in its development. We shall look at two important figures in world public relations.

Ivy Ledbetter Lee (1877-1934)

Public relations historians have argued that Lee was the most famous of the early public relations practitioners. He is often regarded as a major player in birthing modern public relations. This could be due to the major roles he played in the development of the profession. Lee helped develop many techniques and principles that practitioners use today. He believed in open communication with the media and was forthright and candid in his dealings with the press. Lee was recognised in the early twenties as the first public relations counsel. He understood that good corporate performance was the basis of good publicity. He advocated open and honest communication between an organisation and its clients. It was his principle that business had to tell its story honestly, accurately and openly in order to win public confidence and support.

Two of Lee's major clients were John D. Rockefeller and the Pennsylvania Railroad. He developed the publicity policy of 'the public be informed', which in his view was essential to good corporate image. Each time Lee sent a release to the press, he attached a copy of his famous declaration of principles which read in part "This is not a secret press bureau. All our work is done in the open. We aim to supply news. This is not an advertising agency; if you think any of our matter properly ought to go to your business office, do not use it. Our matter is accurate. Further details on any subject treated will be supplied

promptly, and any editor will be assisted most cheerfully in verifying directly any statement of fact. In brief, our plan is, frankly and openly, on behalf of the business concerns and public institutions, to supply to the press and public of the United States prompt and accurate information concerning subjects which is of value and interest to the public to know about."

At a time when public relations was at its infancy, Lee gave it credibility and ethical standards. Ivy Lee was however not a saint. Some authors believe that he did always apply the standards of truth and accuracy to his work. He was also believed to have secretly worked for Hitler.

Edward L. Bernays (1891-1995)

Bernays was an author, educator and public relations pioneer. He coined the famous public relations term 'public relations counsel' in his first book by the title '*Crystallizing Public Opinion*' published in 1923. Bernays later published two other public relations books *propaganda* in 1928 and *Public Relations* in 1952. According to Bernays, he invented the phrase *Public relations counsel* because of the negative connotations attached to such terms as propagandist, publicist and press agent. In his words, "I wanted something broader than publicity and press agentry. I called what I did 'publicity direction', by which I meant directing the actions of a client to result in desired publicity. A year later, Doris {Bernays' wife} and I coined the phrase 'counsel on public relations' , which we thought described our activity better- giving professional advice to our clients on their public relationships, regardless of whether such an activity resulted in publicity".

(Quoted from Edward Bernays' autobiography '*Biography of ideas: Memoirs of Public Relations Counsel,* Edward L Bernays*,* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1965. P.228).

Bernays had his downsides too. He is regarded as on person who encouraged smoking by women when in 1929 he, secretly working for the American Tobacco Company engaged ten carefully chosen women to walk down Fifth Avenue, smoking cigarettes. The women were advancing feminism while setting the stage for a surge in smoking. Bernays also helped establish beer as the 'beverage of moderation'.

4.0CONCLUSION

A close look at the literature on the growth and development of public relations reveals that like in other fields and professions, public relations practice has not had a smooth history. There have been contributors from various parts of the world who made things happen at about the

same time. We have however been able to tie these contributions together in this unit.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has looked at how public relations began. We saw that public relations has grown with human civilization. We also saw the role of ancient Greek and the Catholic Church in contribution though inadvertently to the development of PR. We equally saw certain trends that had some impact on the growth of public relations. Lastly, we took a look at the contributions of Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays, two important figures in public relations' growth.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Highlight and discuss the contributions of the Romans and religious institutions in the development of public relations.

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UNIT 2   HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN NIGERIA

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
    3.1   Development of public relations in Nigeria: Role of the Government
        3.1.1   Role of statutory corporations
        3.1.2   Role of the private sector
        3.1.3   Role of consultancy firms
        3.1.4   Role of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations
    3.2   Achievements of public relations in Nigeria
    3.3   Challenges for public relations in Nigeria
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-marked Assignment
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

We live in a volatile and capricious world, a world that witnesses changes of all genres by the minutes. Some of these changes are positive while others are quite unfriendly. However, in whatever pattern the changes come, there is usually bound to be some friction, since no one policy can be acceptable to all the people all the time. When these frictions occur, the need for mutual understanding increases, hence a deliberate public relations effort becomes necessary. It is the duty of public relations to lubricate the societal engine, if not to eradicate but at least to reduce the friction resulting from change. It is against this backdrop that we can examine the historical development of public relations in Nigeria.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

    Tell a history of the development of public relations in Nigeria
    Outline the major achievements of public relations
    List major contributors to the growth of public relations in Nigeria
    Outline the challenges facing public relations practice in Nigeria

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Development of Public Relations in Nigeria: Role of the Government

It must be stated at the onset that the development of public relations in Nigeria at a formal level began with the government.   In the years preceding the Second World War, the exploitative and conjugative influence of the colonial government had created a poor relationship between it and the people of Nigeria.   At this time, a lot of information were shrouded in secrecy.   The words and actions of the government were very suspect.   During the Second World War and precisely in 1943, the colonial government thought it fit to establish its own public relations outfit in order to keep Nigerians informed on the goings on in the ward in which many Nigerians were involved.   At this time, it was called War Information office.   It was also to create a means of ensuring proper representation and interpretation of government news and views. To achieve this goal, the government employed many Nigerians as Publicity Officers (most of them were former journalists).   In 1948, it further recruited other Nigerians as Assistant Publicity Officers notable among which were Cyprian Ekwensi, Anthony Enahoro and the late Dr. Sam Epelle.   The aim of the government was to use publicity as a vehicle for reaching the people.

Due to the newness of the profession then, coupled with the unpopularity of the colonial government, the public perception of public relations was totally objectionable.

3.1.1 Role of Statutory Corporations

With the pace set and relative success made by the government, public relations was gradually embraced by other statutory and private bodies. The fledgling National Electric Power Authority (formerly Electricity Corporation of Nigeria and now Power Holding Company of Nigeria) was one of the first government parastatals to establish a Public Relations Bureau.   Because of its newness and erratic supply of power then (unfortunately this has not changed), it gave such a prime place to public relations that by 1959 its public relations department had taken a full swing.

The Nigerian Railway Corporation was another organisation whose public relations activities have influenced public relations practice in Nigeria. Before its establishment in 1955, Mr. Ernest Ikoli, a journalist who later became a frontline first republic politician handled the publicity that heralded its formation. After its establishment, it opened a functional department of public relations with a full time Publicity Officer.   Dr. Sam Epelle became the corporation's first chief Public Relations Officer.

3.1.2 Role of the Private Sector

In the private sector, the United African Company of Nigeria, UACN, was the first to set up a public relations department in 1949. It had the goal of informing businessmen and its customers about its activities as well as projecting UACN as a major Nigerian industrial, technical and commercial company.   At this stage, it was called Information Department with one Charles Newham as the first Information Officer. The department was located on the ground flour of the old Niger House in Marina from where it spread out to other branches of the company at Enugu and Kaduna. As the company expanded in later years the public relations department moved to 19 Custom Street from where it finally settled in the multi million naira edifices Niger House in 1967.

Shell BP Petroleum Development Company was another firm that played important roles in the development of public relations in Nigeria. It started public relations Practice in the 1940s but it was not until 1969 that it had a full-fledged public relations Department, with the objective of ensuring free flow of information between the company, local communities, the mass media, and commercial organisations.

The bold steps taken and achievements recorded by these organisations through their public relations Departments have spurred other public and private companies into action.   Thus, all corporate bodies in Nigeria today have a public relations department and also make use of public relations consultancy firms.

3.1.3 Role of Consultancy Firms

The development of public relations consultancy firm cannot be left out in the discussion on the history of public relations in Nigeria. On record among those who practiced public relations consultancy on individual basis in the sixties were the likes of late Ebun Adesioye, Otunba Kunle Ojora, Peter Hospidales, Dotun Okubanjo, Dr Clarkson Majomi and Mr. Olu Ademulegun.   But today, four PR consultancy firms are in the forefront in Nigeria.   They, with their chief executives include (1) Bloomel Public Relations Practitioners – Lanre Oginni, (2) Good Contact Public Relations Services. – Kunle Oyalowo, (3) Philip Johnson and Associates – Olu Johnson, (4) Progan Promotions – Toye Ogunnorin.

3.1.4 Role of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations

Whatever achievements the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria has made so far cannot be divested from the regulatory body, the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations – NIPR. The NIPR, former called PRAN

Public Relations Association of Nigeria came into being through the efforts of Dr. Samuel Epelle in 1963 and has since then brought the practice of public relations to an enviable position in Nigeria.   The institute has been headed by such public relations luminaries as:

Dr. Sam Epelle	1963 -1968
Chief Kanu Offonry	1968 -1972
Mr. Tonye Willie-Harry	1972 -1976
Mr. Ikhaz Yakubu	1976 -1980
Chief Bob Ogbuagu	1980 -1984
Chief Alex Akinyele	1984 -1988
Mr. Mike Okereke	1988 -1993
Mr. Sabo Mohammed	1993 - 1998
Chief Ajibade Oyekan	1998 – 2001
Mr. Senibo Bobo Sofiri Brown	2001 – 2005
Chief Ikechuckwu Nwosu	2005-Date

3.2   Achievements of Public Relations in Nigeria

Although the practice of public relations is young in Nigeria, it has achieved some measure of success. These successes however have been made possible due to the role of NIPR in public relations practice in the country. Therefore, the achievements of public relations practice will be discussed vis-à-vis that of the Institute.

First, public relations practice has been brought to a high social pedestal and recognition within the few decades of its inception in the country. This is especially true when we consider the Public perception of the first Publicity Officers of the colonial government by the then Nigerian people.

Second, the relative peace that Nigeria has witnessed since the end of the civil war has been due to the public relations role of government information ministry. The Federal Ministry of Information is noted to have the highest concentration of public relations practitioners with about 600 well trained practitioners in Nigeria.

Third, the supervisory role of the NIPR on the practice of public relations in Nigeria has improved the examination and course standard of would-be practitioners, thereby making the standard of practice relatively high. This has had the effect of screening out quacks in the profession to some extent.

 Fourth, public relations practice has developed in the country to a consultancy level. This resulted in the launching of the Public Relations Consultants Association of Nigeria, PRCAN in 1984.

Another major achievement is the enactment of Decree No.16 of 1990 which empowers the institute to determine what standards of knowledge and skills are to be attained by persons seeking to become registered members of the public relations profession, and reviewing those standards from time to time as circumstances may permit.

With the decree, practitioners are protected against charlatans, thus giving employers the opportunity to choose the best.

3.3   Challenges of public relations in Nigeria

Despite the achievements mentioned above, it must be observed that many problems and challenges still inhibit the growth, development and public perception of the profession.

To start with, the profession is still clustered with many strange bed fellows. Failures in other fields have often found a haven in public relations in Nigeria. This has had much adverse effects on the public perception of qualified practitioners in the profession.

Also, the government, which is the largest single patron of public relations, still depends on overseas public relations consultants.   This has robbed the local professionals of much profit and growth. There is no overseas public relations genius that knows the behavioural pattern of Nigerians more than local P.R consultants. There are also the problem situations in which in-house public relations practitioners of companies have viewed the local consultants as threats whenever the management of their companies have need of consultancy services for big projects. This situation is a challenge especially to the regulatory body.

Yet another major problem is the failure of most private companies to place their public relations men on the management board.   Most decisions are often taken without the knowledge of their public relations staff who are forced to implement these decisions, only to be blamed when such policies fail. The institute could prevail on the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to make this a compulsory policy for every organisation.

A major failure and challenge to Public Relations practice in Nigeria is poor community relations. Corporate bodies ought to pay attention to the interest of the immediate community in which they operate. The neglect of this vital area is attributable to the perennial restiveness and wave of hostage taking and kidnapping we have witnessed in recent times.

4.0   CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it should be noted that although the practice of public relations in Nigeria has made some enviable giant leaps over the years, it is still a budding profession; it is still in its formative stage.

5.0   SUMMARY

This unit has looked at the history and development of public relations in Nigeria. We saw the roles played by the statutory corporations, the private sector, the government, the Nigerian Institute of Public relations and consultancy firms. We also examined the achievements and challenges of public relations in Nigeria.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the development of public relations in Nigeria

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 3   MODELS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

As we have seen in some parts of this course, public relations is a core social science discipline. This implies that its activities relate directly with human nature and activities. Although humans are dynamic rather than static in behaviour, thus making their actions largely unpredictable, yet there are basis by which we can fairly predict certain of those actions. Public relations practitioners have developed some models that would help explain certain phenomena in public relations practice.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

       Define a model
       State the relevance of models to public relations
       Discuss certain public relations models

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   What is a Model?

At the base of public relations is communication, and communication the a dynamic process of sharing ideas and information. Models are often used as a basis for understanding communication. Before we go too far, we need to ask ourselves the question 'what is a model?' Generally speaking, a model is a representation of something. It is a small-scale or miniature representation of something that serves as a guide in constructing the full scale version of that thing.

A model is a representation of an object, idea or process. It is a simple way of describing a seemingly complex process or system to enhance a quick understanding of it. According to Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin (1981), communication models 'help us to see the components of communication from a perspective that allows for analysis and … understanding of the complexities of the process.''

Public relations practice follows a defined process which over time has remained constant in spite of changes in society, technology and man. This goes to say that whenever you employ the defined processes of public relations as laid down by its practitioners (baring other situational factors) you would very likely get the similar results.
.
3.2   The RACE Model

There are several models of public relations. We shall examine a few of them in this unit. Let's begin with the classical John Marston's RACE model which he created in 1963. The acronym RACE stands for:

Research **A**ction
Communication
Evaluation

According to Marston, any public relations process must follow the above four steps.

Research

Research is the discovery stage of a problem-solving process. As a practitioner of public relations, you would need research to gather information that would help you take the right decisions. Research would help you to discover the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to your clients' image. You would also discover the make up of your clients' publics as well as their perception of your client.

Action

Blind decision-making in public relations can have unsavoury consequences. Information gathered through research would help you to take appropriate actions.

Communication

This is the execution stage of the public relations process. Here, practitioners direct messages to specific publics in support of specifies

goals. Any communication strategy that is worth its salt is usually two-way in format; the organisation speaks to its publics and equally listens to those publics when they speak.

Evaluation

Evaluation asks the question 'how effective have our strategies been'? No one public relations approach is a sure-fire for success. Usually, you adopt one method, evaluate its effectiveness and continue with it if works right, or overhaul it if it does not. Any public relations process without built-in evaluation mechanisms would at best be a guess work. You never know what worked, what did not work, and why.

3.3   The Hunt- Grunig Models of Public Relations

These models were developed by professors Hunt and James Grunig. The models include:

1.   The press agentry/ publicity model
2.   The public information model
3.   The two– way asymmetrical model
4.   The two–way symmetrical model.

1.   The Press Agentry / Publicity Model

In this model, the focus of public relations effort is on getting favourable coverage or publicity from the media. It is a one-way communication with propaganda (one-sided argument) as its purpose. The model projects an approach that thrives on falsehood, thus accuracy, ethics and truth are not seen as essential. According to Guth and Marsh (2000), a study in 1989 had revealed that this was the most practiced model of public relations with P.T. Barnum as one of the prominent figures in the practice of the model. The model can be depicted as shown below:

2.   The Public Information Model

This model equally adopts a one-way approach of dissemination of information. However, unlike the press agentry/publicity model, it disseminates truthful and accurate information. It is a model in which the public relations professional acts much like a typical journalist or news reporter 'in residence' in the organisation and the information he or she disseminates is relatively objective. Indeed, the purpose of public

information here is the dissemination of truthful information. The model was developed by Ivy Lee, an early expert in public relations. It is depicted below:

Guth and Marsh report that the 1989 study showed that this model was the second most practiced, but it ranked last in order of preference among practitioners.

3.   The Two–Way Asymmetrical Model

The trust of this model is scientific persuasion. It uses research as a way of influencing vital publics towards the organisation's point of view. The model also attempts to create mutual understanding between the organisation and its publics. Here, the public relations communicator gets feedbacks from the government and then employs appropriate communication theories to persuade the public to accept the organisation's point of view. The essence of research here is to reveal how best to persuade the audience or public. According to Guth and Marsh, the 1989 study showed that it was the least practiced of the four models but it ranked first in order of preference among practitioners. It can be shown thus:

4.   The Two–Way Symmetrical Model.

In this model, public relations communicators make every attempt for each side to understand the other's point of view. The goal here is to achieve mutual understanding albeit in a deeper and more profound way that puts the two parties in a win-win situation. It is a useful model for conflict resolution within an organisation and especially between an organisation and its publics. The public relations communicator here is a middleman between the organisation and its publics striving always at achieving mutual understanding rather than an adversarial relationship. The model is the most preferred by Hunt and Grunig who did the 1989 study. They reported that it was the most practiced model of public relations but ranked second in order of preference among practitioners. Edward Bernays and most communication educators are major supporters of this model. The model is depicted below:
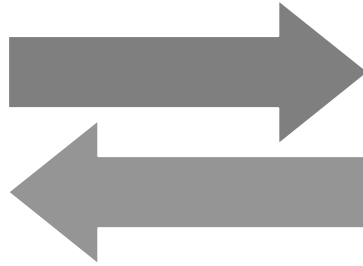
Now which of these models would you adopt for your practice as a public relations practitioner? Well it depends on a number of factors such as the size of your organisation, the distinctive personality of the organisation, its corporate goals and objectives as well as its history and what it has learnt from it. For instance a university of Kansas study showed that the more experience an organisation has in dealing with crisis, the greater the likelihood that the public relations' role is closely tied to the organisation's management. A tabular explanation of the Grunig's model is presented below:

GRUNIG'S FOUR MODELS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

MODELS	PRESS AGENTRY	PUBLIC INFORMATION	TWO-WAY ASYMMETRIC	TWO-WAY SYMMETRIC
Purpose	Propaganda	Dissemination of information	Scientific persuasion	Mutual understanding
Nature of communication	One-way, truth not essential	One-way, truth important	Two-way imbalanced	Two-way balanced
Research	Little, press clippings only usually	Little – readability tests possibly, readership surveys sometimes	Feedback Formative research Evaluation of attitudes	Formative research Evaluation of understanding
Historical figures	PT Barnum	Ivy Lee	Edward Bernays	Bernays, educators
Where practised	Sports, theatre, product promotion	Government, non-profit orgs, structured companies	Competitive business	Regulated business and modern flat structure companies
% of market	15%	50%	20%	15%

Adapted from Jim R. Macnamara's 'A review of the use of evaluative and formative research'

4.0   CONCLUSION

Attempting to study public relations without models is like building a house without a plan. Models form the basis for a good understanding of the practice of public relations. They also preempt the problems inherent in some public relations programmes by providing basis for resolving them. Again, models are predictive signposts that could tell the consequences and implications of certain public relations decisions.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, we saw that a model is a miniature representation of something and it can serve as a guide in making a bigger version of that thing. We also looked at the usefulness of models in public relations. Two communication models namely: the linear model and the interactive model were discussed as precursors to the Hunt-Grunig models of public relations.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Explain the four components of the RACE model of John Marston

7.0   REFERENCE/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 4   PUBLIC RELATIONS MODELS (THE MELVIN SHARPE'S MODEL)

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
       3.1   Melvin Sharpe's Behavioural Theory Model for Public Relations
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor Marked Assignment
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In the preceding unit, we looked at some useful public relation models. A close look at these models would reveal their inherent weaknesses. The behavioural theory model of public relations which is the subject of this unit hinges public relations on human relations. Good public relations is an extension of good human relations.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Explain the peculiarities of the Melvin Sharpe behavioural theory in comparison with the Grunig's model
Explain the behavioural principles that achieve harmonious public relations and what they achieve.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Melvin Sharpe's Behavioural Theory Model of Public Relations

This model, created by old public relations workhorse Melvin L. Sharpe, attempts to take care of the defects in the four models of Hunt and Grunig. According to Sharpe, these models do not achieve all the elements of behaviour necessary for effective public relations performance. In other words, they fail to meet the behavioural criteria for achieving good public relations. Sharpe's model is premised on the assumption that certain behavioural actions are necessary for good public relations as those behaviours lubricate relationships; and that communication is a tool for creating awareness of those actions.

The analysis of the personal or organisational behaviour of what it is that lubricates relationships for the achievement of long term stability resulted is what Sharpe calls the 'five behavioural principles' necessary for the performance of public relations. The interesting side to these five principles is that they are relevant not only for public relations purposes in an organisation but they are equally applicable in harmonising personal relationships with friends, a spouse, or an employer. They are all about social ethics and by extension organisational ethics. In the same ways in which the presence or absence of these behaviours harmonises or disharmonises interpersonal relationships, so do they in organisational and public relations situations.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Based on the assumptions of the Melvin Sharpe model, is it safe to say that any one with good human relations qualities would be a good public relations practitioner? If not, what other qualities do you think are useful to an aspiring public relation person?

Sharpe thinks that adherence to these principles would serve the long range interest of the organisation rather than the immediate self-interests of its individual members. In this way, long term stability is possible. According to Sharpe, the behavioural principles that achieve harmonious public relationships and what they achieve are:

Honesty for credibility
Openness for consistency of actions for confidence
Fairness for reciprocity
Continuous communication to prevent alienation and build relationships
Continuous image analysis for corrective adjustment in behaviour or communication.

We won't take much time on this topic, but the crux of these five principles is that when they are imbibed at the micro level of inter human relationship, they engender smooth relations; and when adopted at the macro level of an organisation with its various publics, they achieve the same results or probably better ones. But we must note that it is not as simplistic at the corporate level as it sounds because here you are dealing with wide ranges of interests in the form of publics with different values, so what you regard as honesty may not be enough honesty to some of your publics. Again when you take the last behavioural principle of continuous image analysis, you find out that the way you analyse yourself will not be the same way your publics would analyse you. The result of this is that the corrective adjustments you make in behaviour or communication may not fit into their expectations.

These principles are depicted in a tabular format below. It provides a summary of the public relations principles, the reasons for their performance, the difficulty in achievement, the cost to public relations performance if the behavioural principle is not achieved or maintained.

Behavior	Reason	Difficulty	Means of Achievement	Cost to Public Relations Performance if Not Achieved	Cost to Organization if Not Achieved
Honesty	Credibility	New knowledge/ Social value change	Environmental research/ Continual self-analysis	Message rejection/ Ineffective communication	Loss of internal & external support
Openness/ Consistency	Confidence	Openness need is situational	Public opinion analysis/ Management commitment & control	Message rejection/Mistrust	High cost of ineffective communication/Loss of internal & external support
Fairness	Reciprocity	Concepts differ/Basis must be communicated	Public opinion analysis/ Continuous self- evaluation of basis/ Willingness to adjust	Damaged relationships/ Communication rejection	Loss of repeat sales/Govt. Regulation/Punitive regulation/Loss of support/Increased taxation/Loss of employee loyalty
Continuous communication	Prevent alienation/ Build relationships	Overcoming communication roadblocks/ Maintenance of two-way communication	Continuous evaluation of communication effectiveness/ Strategic public relations planning	Communications rejection/ Misinformation Uneducated audiences/lack of change adjustments	Increased cost of repairing relationships/Time required in rebuilding relationships/Loss of support for management goals/Target audience self-interpretation of organizational messages
Accurate image analysis	Corrective adjustments	Achievement of accurate self-analysis/Management reluctance to change existing behavior	Continuous target public opinion analysis/ Corrective communication	Ineffective public relations programs/Dependence on one-way communication strategies/ Misinformation without awareness/Image damage without knowledge	Expense of using ineffective communication or public relation strategies/Inadequate information upon which to base sound management decisions/Lack of full productivity potential/Unionization

Melvin Sharpe's Behavioral Theory Model for Public Relations

This model would be useful in helping management understand its role in achieving effective public relations and why good performance requires professional guidance. It should also be useful in making management realise the cost to the organisation when there is a lack of public relations performance achievement.

4.0   CONCLUSION

As noted earlier, models provide a good basis for analysing several variables and issues in public relations as well as providing explanations for the differences between theory and reality. A proper grasp of the models discussed in this unit will equip you with the ability to analyse and provide explanations for several decisions, failures and success you may see in your public relations programmes.

5.0   SUMMARY

This unit has seen us through a very important aspect of the public relations: models of public relations. A model is a small-scale or miniature representation of something that serves as a guide in constructing the full scale version of that thing. We took off from basic communication models like the unidirectional model and the interactional model. We also looked at the very important Hunt-Grunig models of public relations. Lastly we attempted to plug whatever holes there are in the Grunig model with the behavioural theory model for public relations.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSESSMENT

Discuss the relevance of the Melvin Behavioural theory model of public relations in contemporary public relations practice.

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UNIT 5   PUBLIC RELATIONS RESEARCH

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

"Research can cover a multitude of sins." This assertion by David Wragg, head of corporate communications, for the Royal Bank of Scotland aptly captures the vital place of research in public relations. Refusal to do research on vital public relations matters is like attempting to solve a new problem with old tools. And what do you get? More problems than solutions.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

        Explain the procedure for doing public relations research
        Do a public relations research

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Public Relations Research

We have earlier on established the fact that all about public relations is about human relations and that humans are dynamic beings and indeed the society in which they live is ever changing. Thus, it is one of the major tasks of the public relations man to evolve ways the update of man and the update of his society. This can only be achieved through a well articulated research process. Indeed the first step in the public

relations process is research, why do people, public relations people downplay research? Can you guess some reasons? Well, let's see the following common reasons:

Most times they think they already know what they ought to know about the issue or problem on hand and as such they will know by and by whether or not they will be successful.

Lack of time. This is a most unimaginable alibi for not doing research, after all we often ay what is what doing at all is what doing well and no man can be too busy for his priority. We can conclude that it is not likely to be a problem of time but a lack of appreciation of the place of research in public relations.

Lack of personnel: This is one of the many reasons organisations give for not doing research in public relations. But you and I know that good management can ensure availability of relevant hands to do research in the company.

Lack of money: Well it all depends on the size of money we are talking about here. Usually, this is a function of the overall budget for the plan or campaign. But the truth is that not all researches are expensive. You can still do research on salient parts of your campaign even if you have to work with a shoestring budget.

Lack of how-to knowledge: This is a simple problem o solve. Get a consultant   research firm. As long as it's a good one, expect dependable results.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Give three other reasons why you think public relations practitioners skip research   in their practice.

3.2   Of What Use Is Research Anyway?

Maybe one very good reason you gave as an answer to the SAE above why practitioners avoid research is because they do not know what use research could be. If this is the case, then you are absolutely right. This is why we are examining the issue here. The May 1994 edition of the Public relations Journal outlined six ways in which public relations practitioners can use research at virtually every stage of the public relations process:

To formulate strategy: Attempting to formulate any policy without adequate research means using an old approach to solve a new problem. You could also be aping your competition.

To gauge success: All your policies, programmes and campaign cannot be hundred per cent successful at all times (the truth is

except you are a super brat, you can hardly attain hundred per cent success in public relations). You will therefore require good research to ascertain your degree of success per time.

To test messages: Very often you'll need to test the appropriateness of your messages vis-à-vis the campaign goals and objectives as well as your target audience. This can only be done through research.

To get publicity: You cannot underestimate how much people who are completely oblivious of your organisation or its programmes and activities until you do some research. Often, you can use such research as opinion polls o warm up yourself to new audiences and target publics.

To sway opinion: Sometimes you would be amazed at what some of your publics know about you as against what you think they know about you. You can only find out through good research and in the process adjust their impressions about you.

You can also use research to preempt a problem or a crisis. As we learnt in a previous unit, crisis do not just happen, they often give you warning signals. But there are times when the signals may not give you enough information to help you track or burst the crisis. This is where research comes in.

Research also helps you to reduce cost by giving you a clear direction to focus your energy on. Without research, we dissipate energy, we point the water nozzle the wrong direction, prepare the wrong messages and speak to the wrong persons. With research however, we know where we are going from the start. Moreover we won't go about our duties based on hunches, guesses or surmises but on solid, empirical facts.

3.3   Data Collection Methods in Public Relations Research

In doing research for public relations, various techniques are open to you. You will however choose the method that would give you the best results to help you take the most appropriate decisions. The technique you choose would depend on the nature of the problem you are researching into, the available resources and the constraints imposed by your social, political and cultural environments. You would also have to think of your budget, the skill and capabilities of your research personnel as well how much time you have on your hands.

3.4   Developing a Research Strategy

The success of any endeavour depends on knowing how to succeed at it. Knowing how to succeed depends on developing an appropriate strategy. Same goes for research. In research, you are faced with two important questions namely; what do I want to know and how will I gather that information i.e. how will I know what I want to know.

3.5   What Do I Want To Know?

When doing public relations research, the nature of what you want to know is determined by the problem you are attempting to solve by the research. What you need to know falls into any of the following: client research, stakeholders research, problem-opportunity research and evaluation research. You could have situations in which you have more than one problem to solve; therefore, you would need to look at more areas than one.

Client Research

When you do client focused research, you would be interested in the individual client, or company. You would want to know the size of the organisation, the nature of its products or services, its history, staffing requirements, markets & customs, competition budget, legal environment, reputation and beliefs about the issue at stake. Indeed it is the issue at stake that decides what directions to point your searchlight when you do client research. You may want to also see the organisations competitions, what advantages do they have over it, what threats do they pose, e t c.

Stakeholder Research

Any organisation usually has a wide range of public and constituencies. Stakeholder research helps you identify those publics that are vital to the success of your organisation or client.

Each of your constituency has one form of stake (interest) or the other in your organisation. You must equally realize that each of these publics has its own values, altitudes, concerns, needs and predispositions which affect their actions or relations on issues related to your organisation per time. Again, this also depends on the issues at stake as most publics would take a position today and another tomorrow depending on how the issue affects them.

Problem–Opportunity Research

This kind of research attempts to answer two vital questions: what is the issue, and what stake (if any) does your organisation have in the issue. A problem – opportunity research delves into a problem vis-à-vis its relationship with or effect on your organisation or client. It attempts to ask why is it necessary or unnecessary for you to act. Now there are ways to handle a problem or an opportunity, you can be reactive, proactive or do nothing. Indeed, doing nothing would be a good option in some situations. In essence, problem – opportunity research is useful in helping your organisation or client to decide weather to react as well as how to react.

Evaluation research

An evaluation research sets out procedures for determines the success of a P. R plan from the beginning. When you mount any kind of campaign, you must equally put proper mechanisms in place for assessing how well you have achieved your set campaign goals and objectives. To do a good job of evaluation research, you must know where you are before the campaign and be able to assess your campaign by campaigning the present with the past.

3.6   How Will I Gather Information?

By asking the question 'How do I gather information?', we refer to the methods to employ in gathering required information. As noted earlier, how we would gather information depends largely on the time and resources at out disposal. Where we have enough of these, we can afford to do detailed research using scientific research methods designed to create a representative picture of reality. This kind of research is known as formal research or scientific research. In public relation, formal research is used to create an accurate portrayal of a stakeholder group.
Another kind of research is the informal research or non-scientific research. Informal research describes some aspects of reality but does not necessarily develop an accurate picture of the lager reality as a whole. Informal research can be quite useful in public relations, but it shouldn't lead us to conclusions about an entire stakeholder group. We shall now examine both kinds of research beginning with the informal research.

3.7   Informal Research

Ajala, (2001) identified nine informal research methods. According to her, these methods usually are such that can be adopted with minimal formal settings. They are however very dependable in their results as

they involve personal contacts with the research subjects or respondents. These informal methods include:

1. **Personal contacts**: This method involves a one-to-one information souring from reliable sources. It's a very reliable method as the respondent is more likely to give you a candid opinion of a situation. You could employ this method in discovering people's disposition towards some policies of your organisation. Some of your respondents here could be company staff, shareholders or members of your host community.

2. **Key informants**: There are some vital information that you may not be able to source from just 'personal' contacts as discussed above. This is another way of saying that all personal contacts are useful in public relations research but some are more useful than others. Among your key informants would be opinion leaders and experts whom you can consult regularly in specific situations. These include editors, reporters, labour leaders, civil leaders, etc. Each of these persons would be handy in supplying worthwhile information in certain areas that are special to them. The nature of information that you would get from this group is not the same as those you will get from personal contacts.

3. **Community forums:** These forums are similar to town meetings that bring elders and opinion leaders together to solve specific problems or deliberate on specific matters of common interest. Community forums are veritable avenues for public relations practitioners to gather information needed to research purposes.

4. **Focus Groups:** When you wish to ascertain public knowledge, opinions, disposition or behaviour on specific issues, focus groups are usually useful. Although results obtained from focus groups may not be as representative of any particular public (depending on its composition) yet issues raised in such groups serve as basis for further research. Focus groups also have the advantage of providing immediate feedback to the researcher. You could also use focus groups to test the clarity and fairness of survey questions. They are also relatively less expensive than most other research methods.

5. **Advisory Committee Boards:** You could also have standing committees or boards on which are some influential persons that the issue of your research or investigation concerns. Such persons could give very worthwhile without feeling that they are being used to achieve some ends. They could even see it as a privilege to be on such committees or panels and would be willing to give it heir best shot.

6. **Ombudsman:** The ombudsman is a complaints collection committee or agency. The existence of an ombudsman often reduces the tension that could lead to crisis as the complaints brought before it often serve as feedback that could give management an idea of the feelings of some of its publics. Information obtained through this technique could be used as basis for further research.

7. **Call-in Telephone lines:** If you work for any of the oil companies in the oil producing areas in Nigeria, or you are a consultant to any of them, you could garner lots of information from radio and television current affairs programmes when such programmes focus on matters that relate to oil producing companies and the host communities.

8. **Mail Analysis:** You cannot underestimate the usefulness of mail analysis. Several of the letters that you receive from your publics could point to a clear direction in their disposition towards your organisation or client. This underscores the importance of good record keeping and topical indexing of every mail you receive. From all we have seen about public relations publics, no well-meaning organisation would disregard mails from its publics.

9. **Media Content Analysis:** Some media report about your organisation or client could serve as springboards for research. Therefore, you must keep abreast of the media and their reports about your organisation or client. You can do this by targeting radio or television programmes that may likely report you or through which some of your publics may air their views about you. You msut also listen to news reports and commentaries. Again its worth the time to go through the papers and file clippings of reports that relate to your organisation or client. These clippings would be useful when you have to do some formal research.

3.8   Formal Research

Public relations practitioners commonly use five research methods which we shall discuss in a moment. These methods are: secondary (library) research, feedback research, communication audits, focus groups and survey research.

Secondary (Library) Research

Secondary research as different from primary research uses materials generated by others (often in primary research). In primary research, you go to the source of the finding and obtain information form the scratch, whereas in secondary research, you make use of existing materials. Secondary research sources include:

1. Published materials like newspaper and magazine articles, library references, press clippings, directories and trade association data, as well as the Internet.

2. Organisational records like annual reports, financial reports and other information that public companies are required by law to give to the public.

3. Public records generated by governments. Except for information that border on national security, most government ministries and departments are required to freely give out information to members of the public. Some of these information could be sourced on the web sites of these government departments.

Feedback Research

Feedback research often helps and organisation to receive unsolicited but useful information from stakeholders group's responses to its actions and policies. These responses can be in the form of letters, telephone calls and press clippings. Emails at your company's web site could be a good source of feedback research.

Communication Audits

When you conduct a communication audit research, you are attempting to determine whether your organisation communication is consistent with its missions and goals. In completing a communication audit, you review your organisation's communication and records and conduct interviews with key officials. According to Guth and Marsh (2000), a communication audit would usually answer five questions:

a) What are the organisation's stated goals in relation to its stakeholder groups?
b) What communication activities has the organisation used to fulfill those goals
c) What communication activities are working well and are consistent with those goals?

    d) Which communication activities are not working well towards the achievement of those goals?

    e) Given the findings of this audit, what revisions in goals of communication activities are recommended?

Focus Groups

Focus groups are an informal research method in which interviewees or moderators meet with groups of selected individuals to determine their opinion on specific issues. Although focus groups are not very representative of a particular public, they are useful at indicating a public's knowledge, opinion, predisposition, and behaviour.

Focus groups are useful for generating qualitative rather than quantitative data. The proponents of focus groups believe it is an excellent way to discover the attitudes of customers, prospects and other target groups and publics. One benefit of the focus group is that it can directly involve your publics or audiences. They can even watch the proceedings behind a one-way mirror. As a result, your findings will have more credibility.

Although there are no agreed ideal numbers on how many people should form a focus group, many moderators hold the view that 8 to 12 persons are just appropriate. It is believed that id a group is larger than 12, there would be problem with control and it could be difficult to get meaningful interaction among the participants. If the group is smaller than 8 it could reduce the opportunity for variety of inputs.

Guth and Marsh give the following ten-point advice on how to conduct a focus group.

1) Develop a list of general questions based upon information needs
2) Select as a moderator someone skilled in interviewing techniques
3) Recruit eight to twelve participants
4) Record the session on audiotape or videotape (or both)
5) Observe the session
6) Limit the discussion to 60- 90 minutes
7) Discuss opinions, problems, and needs -not solutions
8) Transcribe the tape prepare a written report on the session
9) Prepare a written report on the session
10) Remember that focus groups are informal research

Survey Research

Surveys are one of the commonly used research methods in public relations today. Two reasons that may be adduced for this are that survey gives you first-hand information and it is relatively inexpensive. Surveys are very useful tools in targeting communications and

measuring results. Through computer analysis, survey research makes it easier to select the right target, use the appropriate message, and communicate through the most effective channels and measure results.

The basic idea behind survey methodology is to measure variables by asking people questions and then to examine relationships among the variables. In most instances, surveys attempt to capture attitude or patterns of past behaviour

Surveys often use one, or some combination of two, procedure(s): questionnaires; and interviews. A questionnaire almost always is self-administered, allowing respondents to fill them out themselves. All the researcher has to do is arrange delivery and collection. You can hardly be guaranteed of a hundred percent return rate on your distributed questionnaires though. An interview typically occurs whenever a researcher and respondent are face-to-face or communicating via some technology like telephone or computer

4.0   CONCLUSION

Researching for public relations makes the difference between a good job and a bad one. Once in a while you may be able to take some decision based on hunches and assumptions, but in order to be largely sure of the basis for your decisions it is worth the effort to expend a little amount of money on research.

5.0   SUMMARY

 In this unit we have seen the need for research in public relations. We saw the various uses of research as well as the types that are open to us in specific given situations.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Explain Guth and Marsh's ten steps for the conduct of focus group research.

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MODULE 3   WRITING AND SPEAKING IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

UNIT 1   THE CHALLENGES OF WRITING AND SPEAKING IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the major survival skills in public relations and indeed in the mass communication career. In 1998, a survey of employment in public relations revealed that 89 percent of all employers in the U S list writing well as one of their "top three sought-after skills. This tells you that if you are a good writer, then your prospects are high in public relations and indeed the mass media. You would be doing a lot of press release writing as well as features, speeches, brochures, and other messages that relate to your various audiences.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

Describe the challenges of writing and speaking in public relations
Describe the process of writing and composition
Explain the phases and subcomponents of writing
Write a composition by putting into practice the second and third objectives

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Writing

But what does writing involve? Let me say from the onset that good writing is hard work. This is a fact that has been acknowledged by award-winning writers of past and contemporary times. American journalist and playwright Gene Fowler said "writing is easy, all you do is stare at a blank sheet of paper until drops of blood form on your head." Ernest Hemmingway added "writing is easy, just open a vein and bleed on paper." All these suggest that writing can be a challenging job. I must tell you however that writing is easy if you learn it. Writing is like fixing a jigsaw. This seems to support Mortiner Adler's view that 'good writing like a good house is an orderly arrangement of parts.' The days are gone when writers were born. Now they are made. No doubt there are persons with some native writing ability, but without effort at learning to use the ability, such persons won't become good writers.

3.2   Speaking

Speaking is equally a useful skill for public relations. You would find yourself speaking at different times with one or more of your various publics like the media, your immediate community, your employees, etc. Although you need different approaches when dealing with each of these publics, but there are general speaking skills that apply to all and that is what we shall look at in this section.

We shall not be doing an intensive lesson on writing and speaking in this course. I shall simply look at the basics of these very important skills and expect you to pick up specific books on them from your bookstore. You could also take the NOUN course on public speaking.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Outline and discuss some challenges you envisage as a public relations writer and speaker.

NOTE:
I would like to acknowledge that the ideas in the next four subunits i.e. the Phases of Writing, the Writing Process, Selecting the Subject, and the Writer's Compass, belong to Professor Adidi Uyo of the Department of Mass Communication, University of Lagos. I gleaned them from my course note on 'Writing for the Mass Media' which he taught me.

3.3   The Phases of Writing

Good writing is a function of good organisation of thought, and good organisation follows a defined process. We can look at the process of writing in terms of the main phases namely: prewriting, writing and rewriting.

Prewriting involves generating ideas, planning, purposing, ideating and searching, setting goals and objectives of writing.

Writing has to do with putting together words that convey the meanings you wish to make. It is a stage where you compose, absorb some words and reject others.

Rewriting involves putting finishing touches to your work. It entails rechecking, editing, fine-tuning, smoothening and polishing. To a lot of writers, this stage may be a crucial one and the ability to handle it well could reveal the difference between a fledgling of a writer and a groomed one. Vladimir Nabokov once said

'I have rewritten – often several
times – every word I have ever published.
My pencils outlast their erasers.'

Suzan Sontag also asserted

'My first drafts
Have only a few elements worth keeping
I have to find what they are
And build from them
And throw out what doesn't work
And what simply is not alive.'

3.4   The Writing Process

A process is a continuous thing that. The question a writer should ask himself before writing is: who are my audience?

a. Age

b. Economic status
c. Social status
d. Race and culture
e. Belief system
f. Religion
g. Areas of special interest.

3.5   Selecting the Subject

The beginning of any good writing is your capability to select a good subject. Selecting a good subject entails one's ability to think up good ideas properly. There are 3 basic requirements in selecting a good subject name:

Ability
Interest
Resources

Ability: In whatever subject you are writing about, it must be a subject in which you have ability to write and this has to do with exposure to the topic, which gives you some knowledge about it.

Interest: You might have interest in a subject but not have ability. However, having interest in a subject backed up with ability makes up part of good writing.

Resources: Good writing cannot be based on the ideas in one's head alone. One needs one's interest and ability to be backed up with resources e.g. thesaurus, an encyclopaedia, etc.

3.6   The Writer's Compass.

According to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 'a compass is an instrument for finding direction.' You need to find your direction as you write any piece in your public relations practice. Below are useful directions to good writing.

Capability
Organization
Medium
Product
Audience
Society
Style

Capability

A writer should always ask him/herself if he/she is capable of writing on the topic on ground. A writer usually excels in his/ her areas of interest and capability.

Product

Every writer has a product. The product can be an advertisement, novel, script, etc. however, except your product is of high quality, you cannot sell. A writer must note that his product represents him/her.

Medium

A writer has a medium through which he/she disseminates his/her writing e.g. Radio, television, newspaper etc.

Organization

A writer must write to fit his/her organisation's style. As much as you are writing for a particular medium, put into consideration your organization. This is because each organisation has its own style of writing.

Audience

A writer must identify his/her audience and know it. Knowledge about your audience will help you tailor the writing to meet their needs.

Society

A writer must put into consideration the society the person is writing for. This is because the members of the society have their own ideas. A writer must know most things about the society, e.g. what it wants, beliefs, culture, etc.

Style

Your style is what singles you out from the crowd. It is your peculiar way of writing that distinguishes you when you work among other writers. Every writer must have a style. You can develop your style by yourself.

3.7   Basic Rules of Writing

Geoffrey Ashe suggested what he called 'six basic rules of writing. '

There are no basic rules of writing, but for the student of writing, adherence to some basic principles helps. Matured writers have equally found these rules as faithful signposts in the process of writing.

1. **Write about what you know and care for:** Writing entails an appreciation of the known. It involves getting across with an idea about which you are fairly knowledgeable. Attempting to write on a topic that you are not familiar with is not only pretentious but suicidal.

2. **Approach people through their interest rather than yours:** This implies that a writer should relate his message to the interest which his audience already has.

3. **Don't let the reader hover uncertainly:** Make your point plain early enough and leave with an ending as strong and expressive as the beginning.

4. **Start from what is familiar and easily grasped, then proceed from that to the uncertain and difficult:** This rule is similar to the elementary mathematics rule of moving from the unknown to the known.

5. **Tell things through concrete examples and anecdotes, and through people rather than abstractions:** A good example of a master of this art of using concrete examples that people can relate to is Jesus Christ who has been described as the greatest teacher the world has ever known. He used example of things his hearers saw and lived with everyday.

6. **Treat your readers with respect:** If you find some expressions rather too abrasive, it is just rational to recast them.

4.0   CONCLUSION

Good writing is at the heart of effective corporate communication. One well written feature or press release enhances the image of your organisation more than a thousand badly written ones. For this reason, writing is worth investing time and money in. Irrespective of your special area in public relations, ability to write well recommends you for faster progress in your career and the beauty of it all is that writing is a skill you can acquire.

5.0   SUMMARY

This unit has focused on the challenges of writing and speaking. We saw the phases of writing: prewriting, writing and rewriting. We also looked at the writing process as well as the method of selecting your subject. Lastly we saw the writer's compass and the basic rules of writing.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

One of the fundamental lessons of this unit is that to write well, it is important that you have a good knowledge of your audience. Do a two-page piece on a selected audience or public of your organisation from the standpoint of age, economic status, social status, race and culture, belief system, and areas of special interest.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2   EDITING AND PROOFREADING

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, we looked at writing errors from the standpoint of a writer. Here, we shall look more at writing errors from the standpoint of an editor or a proof-reader. Editing and proofreading are among the most important aspects of any form of publication. A well written piece can end up badly if you do not take the extra effort required to edit and proofread. A badly constructed sentence, a wrongly placed word or vocabulary, a wrongly placed punctuation can spell doom for a newsletter, a press release or indeed a whole campaign. As a manager of reputation, you must know that any communication that you send to any of your publics is directly or indirectly a public relations stuff. You must therefore ensure that all written documents are thoroughly edited and proofed before dispatching them. Editing and proofreading are no mean jobs. They are usually done by persons who know their onion and are skilful in the use of the language. It is not out of place to state here that if you are not sure of your proofing skills, you can contract it out to experts. As you go through this unit, you will find us repeating some of the things we have learnt earlier. This is very deliberate, and the goal is to get you grounded in reading your and those of others.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

        Identify a passage for editing and proofreading
        Outline steps for editing and proofreading
        Edit and proofread required passages.

3.0   MAIN CONTNET

3.1   Difference between Editing and Proofreading

Editing and proofreading are two terms often confused by most people. Indeed, a number of people use the terms interchangeably. This is due to the subtle difference between them as well as the fact that they can be done by one person who has the ability for them. Editing involves reading for content and information. It is usually done by a person who has knowledge of the subject or focus of the matter to be edited. W\hen you edit a written work, you are checking for actuality of content and information. You are attempting to ascertain if the author is actually passing the appropriate information to his of her intended readers or audience. You are also checking whether he is passing the information as he should. For instance, has he put his information to fit the level of understanding of his readers' age group, educational level and reasoning? You are also checking to ensure he has not infringed copyright laws or any other legal issues, sexist or offensive language. Proofreading is the final stage of the editing process, focusing on surface errors such as misspellings and mistakes in grammar and punctuation. You should proofread only after you have finished all of your other editing revisions.

No doubt a writer can edit his work but very often, it is better and helpful to get assistance from a colleague or consultant in your field if the work is fairly large e.g. a book ort a brochure.

Try to keep the editing and proofreading processes separate. When you are editing an early draft, you don't want to be bothered with thinking about punctuation, grammar, and spelling. If you're worrying about the spelling of a word or the placement of a comma, you're not focusing on the more important development and connection of ideas that make a paper clear and convincing.

3.2   Editing Strategies

Once a rough draft is finished, you should try to set it aside for at least a day and come back to the paper with a fresh mind and thus more easily catch the errors in it. You'll bring a fresh mind to the process of polishing a paper and be ready to try some of the following strategies.

Read the Paper Aloud

If we read the paper aloud slowly, we have two senses--seeing AND hearing--working for us. Thus, what one sense misses, the other may pick up.

Check the Thesis Statement and Organization

Write down your thesis on a piece of paper if it is not directly stated in your essay. Does it accurately state your main idea? Is it in fact supported by the paper? Does it need to be changed in any way? On that piece of paper, list the main idea of each paragraph under the thesis statement. Is each paragraph relevant to the thesis? Are the paragraphs in a logical sequence or order?

Remember That You Are Writing For Others

No matter how familiar others may be with the material, they cannot "get inside" your head and understand your approach to it unless you express yourself clearly. Therefore, it is useful to read the paper through once as you keep in mind whether or not the student or teacher or friend who will be reading it will understand what you are saying. That is, have you said exactly what you wanted to say?

Check the Paper's Development

Are there sufficient details? Is the logic valid?

Check the Paper's Coherence and Unity

Are the major points connected? Are the relationships between them expressed clearly? Do they all relate to the thesis?

Review your Diction

Remember that others are reading your paper and that even the choice of one word can affect their response to it. Try to anticipate their response, and choose your words accordingly.

Original: The media's exploitation of the Watergate scandal showed how biased it was already.

Revision: The media's coverage of the Watergate scandal suggests that perhaps those in the media had already determined Nixon's guilt.

In addition to being more specific, the revision does not force the reader to defend the media. In the first example, though, the statement is so exaggerated that even the reader who is neutral on the issue may feel it necessary to defend the media. Thus, the writer of the original has made his job of persuading the reader that much harder.

3.3   Why Proofread?

Content is important. But like it or not, the way a paper looks affects the way others judge it. When you've worked hard to develop your ideas and present them for others on paper, you don't want careless errors distracting your reader from what you have to say. It's worth paying attention to the details that help you to make a good impression.

Most people devote only a few minutes to proofreading, hoping to catch any glaring errors that jump out from the page. But a quick and cursory reread, especially after you've been working long and hard on a paper, usually misses a lot. It's better to work with a definite plan that helps you to search systematically for specific kinds of errors.

Sure, this takes a little extra time, but it pays off in the end. If you know that you have an effective way to catch errors when the paper is almost finished, you can worry less about editing while you are writing your first drafts. This makes the entire writing process more efficient.

3.4   The Proofreading Process

You probably already used some of the strategies discussed below. Experiment with different tactics until you find a system that works well for you. The important thing is to make the process systematic and focused so that you catch as many errors as possible in the least amount of time.

Don't rely entirely on spelling checkers. These can be useful tools but they are far from foolproof. Spell checkers have a limited dictionary, so some words that show up as misspelled may just not be in their memory. In addition, spell checkers will not catch misspellings that form another valid word. For example, if you type "your" instead of "you're," "to" instead of "too," or "there" instead of "their," the spell checker won't catch the error.

Grammar checkers can be even more problematic. These programs work with a limited number of rules, so they can't identify every error and often make mistakes. They also fail to give thorough explanations to help you understand why a sentence should be revised. You may want to use a grammar checker to help you identify potential run-on sentences or too frequent use of the passive voice, but you need to be able to evaluate the feedback it provides.

Proofread for only one kind of error at a time. If you try to identify and revise too many things at once, you risk losing focus, and your proofreading will be less effective. It's easier to catch grammar errors if you aren't checking punctuation and spelling at the same time. In addition, some of the techniques that work well for

spotting one kind of mistake won't catch others.

Read slowly, and read every word. Try reading out loud, which forces you to say each word and also lets you hear how the words sound together. When you read silently or too quickly you may skip over errors or make unconscious corrections.

Separate the text into individual sentences. This is another technique to help you to read every sentence carefully. Simply press the return key after every period so that every line begins a new sentence. Then read each sentence separately, looking for grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors. If you're working with a printed copy, try using an opaque object like a ruler or a piece of paper to isolate the line you're working on.

Circle every punctuation mark. This forces you to look at each one. As you circle, ask yourself if the punctuation is correct.

Read the paper backwards. This technique is helpful for checking spelling. Start with the last word on the last page and work your way back to the beginning, reading each word separately. Because content, punctuation, and grammar won't make any sense, your focus will be entirely on the spelling of each word. You can also read backwards sentence by sentence to check grammar; this will help you avoid becoming distracted by content issues.

Proofreading is a learning process. You're not just looking for errors that you recognize; you're also learning to recognize and correct new errors. This is where handbooks and dictionaries come in. Keep the ones you find helpful close at hand as you proofread.

Ignorance may be bliss, but it won't make you a better proof-reader. You'll often find things that don't seem quite right to you, but you're not quite sure what's wrong either. A word looks like it might be misspelled, but the spell checker didn't catch it. You think you need a comma between two words, but you're not sure why. Should you use "that" instead of "which"? If you're not sure about something, look it up.

The proofreading process becomes more efficient as you develop and practice a systematic strategy. You'll learn to identify the specific areas of your own writing that need careful attention, and knowing that you have a sound method for finding errors will help you to focus more on developing your ideas while drafting the paper.

3.5   Editing and Proofreading Symbols

Proofreading and editing require certain universal symbols often used to determine where corrections are required to be made. Working on a simple publication or a piece of your own may not require your use of these symbols, but when you handle bulky jobs in a set up with clear lines of authority, you may need to use these symbols. It is useful to state however that the person who would need to see the job in which you have used the symbols must understand the symbols and there appropriate uses.

Instruction	Editing Marks (in the line only)	Proofreading Marks (in the line and in the margin)	
delete	Boulders campus events	Boulders campus events	℘
delete and close up	Boullder campus events	Boullder campus events	℘
replace	Denver Boulder campus events	Boulder campus events	Denver
insert	campus Boulder events	Boulder events	campus
insert and close up	Boulde campus events	Boulde campus events	⌐r
transpose	Boulder events campus	Boulder events campus	tr
insert space	Boulder campus events	Boulder campus events	#
insert hair space	"Boulder campus 'events'"	"Boulder campus 'events'"	hr #
close up extra space	Boulder ⌐campus events or Boulder campus events	Boulder ⌐campus events or Boulder campus events	⌒ extra# ℘ extra #
insert line space	# Boulder campus events Denver campus events	Boulder campus events Denver campus events	ℓ #
delete line space	Boulder campus events Denver campus events	Boulder campus events Denver campus events	℘ℓ #
equalize spacing	Boulder‖‖today	Boulder‖‖today	ℓ₃ #
run on/no new paragraph	She runs. He jogs.	She runs. He jogs.	run in
new paragraph	She runs. He jogs.	She runs. He jogs.	¶
line break	She runs. He jogs.	She runs. He jogs.	break
instructions (don't set what's circled)	Boulder campus events which?	Boulder campus events	which?

4.0   CONCLUSION

Editing and proofreading can be highly demanding. They require the use and concentration of all your faculties. You ay not be a first rate editor of proof-reader by sudden flight but with much practice and effort, you could become very good at them. My counsel is that you take interest in finding errors in whatever you read and in a short while you would develop one of the most valuable and sought-after skills in the media world and I dare say that it could make for you a good source of extra income. Beyond what we have learnt in this unit, you must make the effort to contact other extraneous sources on the subject of editing and proofreading. When you colleagues know that you have the eagle eye to see unwanted particles in writings, they would respect you more and this can ultimately recommend you for greater responsibilities.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, we have seen useful techniques for editing and proofreading. We began by examining the difference between editing and proofreading. We saw that to edit, you need to read your paper aloud, check the thesis statement and organisation, be conscious that you ar4e writing for others, check the paper's development, etc. We also saw why we should proofread. We looked at the proofreading process as well as the editing and proofreading symbols.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

What challenges would you normally expect in the editing and proofreading process?

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 3   THE PRESS RELEASE

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
        3.1   A Brief History of the Press Release
        3.2   Effective Press Release
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

This unit brings us to the heart of public relations writing. One of the most frequent things you would do as a practitioner is press release writing. The essence of the press release is to get information about your organisation or client across to your publics through the media. Let's make it clear that not all press releases get published by the media to which they are sent. One obvious reason is space, but beyond space, a medium may not carry an unprofessionally written press release. In this unit, we shall attempt to see the press release and how to write it.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

        Give a brief history of the press release
        Explain the basic parts of a press release.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   A Brief History of the Press Release

The press release is the most common public relations communication tool today and it has grown in use and relevance of time.   The press release was invented in the late 1800s. Usually written in the form of a conventional news story, a release, as it is sometimes called presents the point of view of the organisation that disseminates it. Newspaper editors and reporters often use facts, quotes and other information from releases to amplify their stories or support their accuracy and credibility. I some situations, they use the release exactly as it is, which is why they are written in the usual news format.

Press releases were first used by the American big railroads, although they rapidly became the norm in all corporations and large organisations, both for-profit and non-profit. Early in the 20th century, Ohio Bell Telephone discovered that if it handed out "canned" news in this form, newspaper reporters would stop going to telephone rate hearings to get the information in person, thereby minimising uncomfortable inquiries about the rates and related matters. More often, releases were used, and continue to be used, to attract the media to attend press briefings or request follow-up interviews.

Initially considered a form of advertising because of their self-serving content – and charged for accordingly by some media during the early years of their use -- releases quickly became accepted for what they remain today – a free source of news and information that can be used by newspapers and other media in their coverage as they see fit. The traditional format (one or two pages of double-spaced text with standardized spelling and punctuation) was developed to satisfy the needs of editors for space in which to edit the text, and typesetters who required certain kinds of editorial markings in order to follow the flow of individual pages while typesetting the text. With more and more releases distributed via e-mail and more and more print media moving to digital printing, the format of press releases has become far less important for recipients.

Many public relations practitioners also disseminate their releases far beyond the media to key audiences such as employees and investors --people who are as interested as the media in what the organisations they support are doing. Examples of press releases abound in daily newspapers, magazines as well as the online press rooms of most public companies.

A PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

For better results, your press release should be printed on your organisation's letterhead. It should also include information in a particular order to help the media people get whatever information from any part of the release.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ****Contact: Name, Phone, e-mail address**
(Or date that you wish the information to be released)

Headline: Something that briefly summarizes the point of the release and peaks readers' interest. Just about a line or in the extreme two. Should be about ten words or less)

CITY, STATE—This is the lead, or opening paragraph. It should be brief but address all important points. It should be three to five sentences in length. If you use any abbreviations (e.g., FCMB), spell them out the first time; and put the abbreviation in parenthesis after (e.g., First City Monument Bank (FCMB).

The next paragraph offers more details. For example, it could explain the importance of the event, programme, or other issue. An interesting quote by a key leader would be appropriate here. Remember that information should be included in a descending order of importance, i.e., the most important information goes in the first paragraphs, the less important information toward the end, following the inverted pyramid pattern.

Subsequent paragraphs offer additional information and additional interesting quotes. Limit your release to one or two pages. Keep your paragraphs short (about 3-5 sentences would do). If possible, keep your release to one page.

The last paragraph is called the "boilerplate." It describes the organisation issuing the release and, when appropriate, directs the reader to sources of additional information or materials.

This mark ### lets the reader know that this is the end of the release. You could also use the sign '30'. However if your release goes to the next page, then you write 'MF' at the bottom of the first page to show that "More Follows".

** You could have your contact information on the bottom left of your page.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

Attempt to fix some information about your organisation into the above template and see how it comes out.

3.2   Effective Press Releases

A press release should relate some genuine news. It should be brief, clear, factual, accurate, thoroughly proofread and neat. It should answer who, what, where, when and why in the first paragraph and include information in descending order of importance.

Name of contacts, phone numbers and the release date should be clearly indicated. Releases should be limited to two pages.

If there is more to the story, other information can be added as attachments (Fact Sheets, Biographies or Brochures).

While a press release is an essential tool in public relations, it is one of many. It is usually the primary way you communicate your "NEWS" and information to the outside world.

Quotes are important in a release. Usually it's best to quote the head of your organisation or the person responsible for the program being announced.

Quotes flesh out the factual presentation, lend meaning and colour to the story. They should not sound "stiff." It is best to use quotes that express an opinion or a position. The release itself should be factual.

Press releases can be written on new products, product relaunch, election of officers, special events and programmes, awards and publications, staff promotion, etc, to name a few.

Good press releases tie into local angles. For example, if your company awards scholarship to indigent students in its host community--that's news that might be of interest to an editor.

Your news releases will be used if you gain a reputation for submitting timely, newsworthy information that doesn't need massive editorial overhaul.

Be brief. If an editor or reporter wants more information, he or she will call you.

Write in inverted pyramid style, because editors cut from the bottom of a story. The most important information belongs in the first paragraph, and additional information follows in order of importance. Don't make an editor search for the important points.

Always tell who, what, where, why, when, and how. Use facts, not hype. The typical editor sees hundreds of "Dramatic, new, State-of-the-Art Improvement" stories each day.

Present the facts clearly and simply, and let the editor decide what is important, editors are hired to exercise sound news judgment.

Use active voice, subject-verb construction and conversational language. Write in simple sentences, with two or three sentences per paragraph.

Address news releases to the editor personally. Information that looks like junk mail usually ends up in the newsroom trash.

One page is good; two pages are more than enough. Additional background information can be attached, but don't bury the editor.

List a contact name and phone number clearly in the release. Generally, the contact and telephone are listed at the top of the release with the notation, "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE."

Make the editor's job as easy as possible--double space your release for easy, clear editing. Use a wide margin for the same reason.
Have someone unfamiliar with the subject or contents read your news release. If it doesn't make sense to your test-reader, it probably won't make sense to an editor.

Include a photograph whenever possible. Even if the photograph is never printed, a good photograph may get your release a little closer to the top of an editor's crowded desk.

When a photograph or other art work is included with the release, label the top of the release "with photo" or "with art."

Place a typed label on the back of every photograph. Record the subject, news release title, and your company name. This makes sure your photo find a home in case it gets separated from your release.

Photographs can be expensive to reproduce in sufficient quantities to accompany a release and might not be used anyway. Some newspapers will never use a photograph that has not been taken by a staff photographer; others welcome an interesting, creative shot. It is

worthwhile, however, to send most types of photographs to smaller, weekly papers. Always indicate on the press release that photos are available.

Develop a standard news release distribution list. Include appropriate local newspapers (daily and weekly), radio and television stations, cable news stations, trade publications, and business publications.
Some professionals suggest sending out hundreds of releases; others suggest sending it to only a hand-picked list of key media. Usually it's best to do a bit of both. Use judgment.

Develop two mailing lists--a large, general list, and one carefully targeted to key media whom you will contact individually.

If you want to send news releases to reporters electronically, first send an e-mail asking whether they want to receive them in that format. Some reporters are still paper-based.
News releases should be faxed only when they must be distributed in a hurry because of their timely news value -- not because you didn't get them done on time.

Dr. Randall Hansen offered the following advice on **WRITING SUCCESSFUL PRESS RELEASES.**

One of the most important lessons that beginners need to learn is that writing media releases is all about developing a persuasive communication within the framework of a traditional news story format. Editors will quickly trash media releases that make outlandish promotional promises -- "the best ever," "everyone wins," "one-of-a-kind," "changing humankind forever." You get the idea. Instead, press release writers *must* think like a reporter. Media releases *must* follow journalistic style in order to be given any kind of consideration. How do you accomplish this task? Here's a barebones guideline.

The Headline: In about ten words -- or less -- you need to grab the attention of the editor. The headline should summarise the information in the press release, but in a way that is exciting and dynamic; think of it as a billboard along a highway -- you have just a few words to make your release stand out among the many others editors receive on any given day.

Opening Paragraph: Sometimes called a summary lead, your first paragraph is critical. This paragraph must explain "the five Ws and one H" of the story -- the who, what, when, where, why, and how. This paragraph must summarise the press release, with the following paragraphs providing the detail.

The opening paragraph must also contain the hook: the *one* thing that gets your audience interested in reading more -- but remember that the hook has to be relevant to your audience as well as to the news media. A hook is not a hard sell or a devious promotion -- it's just a factual statement.

The Body: Using a strategy called the *inverted pyramid*, the body of the press release should be written with the most important information and quotes first. This inverted pyramid technique is used so that if editors need to cut the story to fit space constraints, they can cut from the end without losing critical information.

The Closing Paragraph: Repeat the critical contact information, including the name of the person, his or her phone number and/or email address.

4.0   CONCLUSION

A press release is one of the most important but often misused documents in all of public relations. It is, ideally, an objective straightforward, unbiased news story that public relations professionals write and distribute to appropriate mass media of communication. Studies have shown that editors reject as much as ninety percent of press releases they receive. Some of these releases are thrown away for reasons like a lack of local angle, too promotional, lack of strict objectivity, etc. It is expected that we would work on our press release writing skill in order to get more of our releases into target media.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, we saw the history of press release. We examined the various parts of a release by analysing a press release template. We also learnt how to write a successful press release by looking at the various steps required to write a press release.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Your assignment this time will take you out of your comfort zone. You are required to interview two newspaper editors on what they look for in a good press release. This should be at least three pages. You may want o find out the percentage of releases they receive in a given time period e.g. a year, how many are used and how many are rejected. Please state the name of the paper, the editor and the date of the interview in your paper.

7.0   REFERENCES /FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 4   SPEAKING IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In the preceding unit, we saw the place of writing and speaking in public relations. Like we noted in that unit, writing and speaking go together. They are two vital public relations skills. In this unit, we shall discuss some useful elements of public speaking especially as it relates to public relations. You may not be the one doing the speaking sometimes; it would be your boss or your client, but a good understanding of this topic would be handy in preparing them for their various speaking engagements.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

>   Explain various public relations speaking tasks.
>   Discuss steps for researching and planning a speech
>   Outline steps for delivering and evaluating a speech
>   Give a successful speech

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Public Relations Speaking Tasks

The first question we shall attempt to answer is what situations would you need to speak as a public relations professional? Well the answer depends on the kind of organisation or client you work for. There are situations in which some organisations think it necessary to speak to the public whereas some other would rather issue a public statement in a document form.

Generally however, speaking tasks in public relations would include the following:

Annual General Meetings

Your Annual General Meetings would bring together several of your publics such as your shareholders, staff, the government, the media, your host community, etc. It is a time to tell them how your organisation has faired in the past accounting year. You would also outline new plans and policies, receive responses from your publics as well as seek their support for the future. You will agree with me that all these require some good public speaking skills.

Product Launch and Re-launch

When you are introducing a new product into the market or repositioning an existing product, you would need to do some bits of public speaking. You would be expected to tell the publics present about the product, its use and benefits, its unique selling point, price, distribution channels etc. For a product re-launch, you must tell them the reason for a re-launch, what added value the product now has etc.

Fairs and Exhibitions

These are avenues to warm up your company or client into new marketing relationships. You would be having several of your competition there as well; therefore you must gear up for good speaking that would give you a good day.

Press Briefings

You would usually find some reasons to brief the press on certain developments in your organisation at some points. Good public speaking skills would be useful to you here. You may want to state your company's position on a government policy, brief the press on a crisis, refute a media report, etc.

Community Social Events

Your host community may invite your organisation to some events in their community. These could be an annual festival, project commissioning, award ceremonies, coronation ceremonies, etc. Your company could on the other hand be the one hosting the community to similar events e.g. scholarship award ceremonies, project commissioning, etc, you would very likely give a speech at these events.

Other Events

The kinds of events that your organisation or client would put up are usually a function of its nature of business, corporate philosophy, organisational goals and aspirations. They are equally a function of its public relations policy. For instance, if your organisation is the people-oriented type, you will find yourself organising more events and probably giving more speeches.

Appeal for funds

This is a common public relations activity. You may be appealing for funds on behalf of your organisation or your client. Whichever way, you must know that you need an approach that will make your listeners do what you wand them to do.

Presentations

Sometimes you may be required to give a plaque, a certificate or just commendation to someone. Most often, such request comes with little or no notice. You would learn to do this by practice. Reading some good books on public speaking would also help you.

Retirement Speeches

This is a common task in several organisations. At such occasions, the Managing Director or Chairperson may be required to say a few words about the retiring staff. On the other hand, he may be the very one who is retiring.

4.0   CONCLUSION

The above is a small list of the types of speeches you would be prepared to give or prepare others to give. It is an endless list. As your responsibilities and those of your organisation increases, there could be more types of speeches you may want to add to the list. The most important thing to us here however is to acquire the skill for giving speeches. We shall give more attention to this in the next unit.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, we began to see the place of speech giving in the practice of public relations. As a prelude to the next unit, we saw the various types of speech tasks may find yourself performing as you practice.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Outline and discuss five other different speech tasks you may be required to do as you practice.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 5   THE PROCESS OF SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC RELATIONS SPEECHES

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The last unit was a brief on the importance of speaking to public relations practice. We also looked at some speaking tasks a public relations practitioner would usually do. In this unit, we shall look at how exactly you can go about your speaking assignments.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

> Describe the process of planning, delivering and evaluating your speech
> Give a speech

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   The Process of Successful Public Relations Speeches

The list of public speaking situations discussed in unit 4 is almost endless. As your company's needs and goals change, new speaking tasks emerge from time to time. But we must attempt to answer the question: how easy is public speaking? My answer is: not always very easy but you can improve on your speaking skill with time. Even the most experienced speakers around would admit that they have some bit of trepidation any time they have to give a speech. The truth however is that once you get underway with your speech, things get better and with

good planning you can have a smooth sail. But we must note that not all speeches are successful. If you have ever given a speech or listened to a speech which does not seem to be very successful, it could be due to a lack of any of the four steps we shall look at in a moment. No good thing is a product of chance. Same goes for speaking. A successful speech comes by deliberates steps to make it successful. Any successful presentation requires research, planning, delivery and evaluation. Let's go through the steps.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

What is your greatest fear when asked to speak in public? Outline steps to overcome it by first writing down those fears.

3.1.1 Researching your speech

Research is at the heart of any good presentation. In doing your research, you would want primarily to look at your audience, the most important factor in any speaking situation. Finding out about your audience will greatly aid the quality of your delivery. You would want to ask 'who are my target audience?" What values and interests do they have in common? How long do they expect me to speak? Sometimes, it is very needful for   you to ask this last question specifically from the organisers of the event or the leaders of the group.

You must also research into what you want to tell your audience i.e. your message. In doing this you need to know what they know already and devise ways to build on them. An effective message combines your purpose with the values and interests of your audience. This is one very sure way of getting them to listen to you.

Another area of audience research involves identifying opinion leaders in the group. No doubt, you will be speaking with everyone in the group but at important moments in your speech, you may wish to give extra attention to the people who can help you most to achieve your goals.

You must also research into the venue of the event. Not finding out about the venue could mean walking into unknown territory. You need to know the size of the hall, available technical support e.g. audio visual aids, lectern, etc. You may also find out what the sitting arrangement is like or would be like at the event.

3.1.2 Planning Your Speech

If you plan your speech well, you will find it relatively easy to deliver it. The first thing is, plan to be yourself. Trying to be someone else can

give you away and alienate your audience from you. Some of them may think you are attempting to impress them or that you are cocky. So, be yourself. You must plan your speech to align with the values and interests of your audience. You must have a central theme and you must stick to it. How long are you speaking? You should have found this out at the research level. You find out how much time you can get and then use it reasonably. This means that even if you are given one hour, it is not a must that you use all the time. Several on-the-spot factors should help you determine how much of your time to use. No audience likes a speaker who does not respect their time.

After knowing the message and what time is available to you, it's useful to outline your message. It usually helps if you speak with, rather than read to your audience. Except you are delivering a very technical paper or speech requiring close audience pathing, it helps to do an outlined speech. This will enable you make eye contact with your listeners. When you bury your head in your paper, your audience could bury theirs on their desks or their laps.

Another useful thing to do is practice. When you practice your speech, you achieve two thing, you polish your work and also gain confidence. Being comfortable with your presentation helps you reduce anxiety and tension. If possible, practice in the room where you are scheduled to make the presentation; practice at the scheduled presentation time. If you intend to answer questions after your speech, you could have a mock presentation including questions and answers. The essence of all these is to make it seem like the presentation took place in your sitting room and you are telling your guests the best story you can tell.

Audio visuals are interesting speaking aids if used well. Using them well means planning and training with them. Studies have shown that well-designed visual aids can increase audience learning by 200 percent, increase audience retention of main points by 38 percent and reduce explanation by 40 percent. To maximize audio visuals (flip charts, overheads, slides and computer projections) they must be in short headlines and sentences. They must equally be without excessive computer embellishments as these usually distract the audience from your message.

3.1.3 Delivering your speech

How much you succeed here will depend largely on how well you have handled the previous two stages. But let's take it that you have done well in the other stages. Guth and Marsh (2000) say the following about starting your presentation:

"It's the moment of truth. You've been introduced, and you're the centre of attention. After thanking the person who introduced you, pause a moment before you begin. Smile. Look at the people in the room. Show them you're confident, that you're quietly excited about the information you're about to share. Maintain eye contact, and begin your memorized introduction.''

Sound advice isn't it? For most speakers, starting is a major problem. In fact, the few seconds before they are invited to the lectern usually seem the worst in their lives. Experience has shown however that once you start well, you will gain your poise and confidence in a few minutes. Speaking in public is similar to piloting a plane, taking off and landing are usually the most difficult tasks. You can take off well and crash land. Same for a speech, you may start right and end badly if you do not take enough care.

Ensure you stick to your notes as you get unto the heart of your speech, except for some mild circumstantial adjustments. As you speak, maintain eye contacts with individuals in the audience and attempt to elicit verbal or gestured responses from them. By doing this, you keep them awake and interested in your speech and also motivate yourself. Unless you are giving a very formal speech, it could help if you move away from the soap box once in a while especially when you have to make illustrations to drive home your points. This would however be difficult if you are using a wired microphone or one that is stuck to the lectern. Especially in an informal speech situation, you may ask for questions on your speech from the audience. When you do this, ensure you offer as sincere answers as you can. If you are not sure of the answer to a question, admit it, the audience appreciate that and respect you for it. Never give a wrong answer or attempt to evade a question asked by the audience. This could make your credibility to plummet on the spot. If you do not wish to take questions, just smile and say 'thank you very much'' and take your leave of the lectern. You may not take questions if it is a strictly formal speech or if you are standing in for someone.

3.1.4 Evaluating Your Speech

Soon after a good speech, you are likely to get lots of commendations from audience. Do not be carried away by this. Do not begin to think that you are now equal with Martin Luther king Jnr. No one can graduate from the school of public communication. You continue to learn everyday as you give more speeches. At the end of your speech, it would help if you ask some of your close friends and colleagues to give you their sincere assessment of your speech. They would give you their candid opinion. You can also assess yourself by asking vital questions

like: what worked well? What did not work exactly well? How did the technology perform? Did I start right? Did I maintain balance? Did I end well? Did I get the audience's attention? Did I stick to my notes? etc. A sincere look at these questions would help you improve on your next speaking engagement.

3.1.5 Speech Preparation Checklist*

⑧ **Who is going to be in the audience?**

⑧ **How can I find out more about them?**

⑧   **How does the location of the speech affect the content?**

⑧ **Are there any special circumstances I must take into account?**

⑧ **What is my Purpose?**
- ✌ To inform?
- ✌ To entertain?
- ✌ To persuade?

⑧ **What organisational pattern should I use?**
- ✌ Alphabetical
- ✌ Cause-effect
- ✌ Chronological
- ✌ Numerical
- ✌ Problem-solution
- ✌ Spatial
- ✌ Topical

⑧ **Have I suited my style to the audience, purpose, and occasion?**
- ✌ Diction
- ✌ Tone
- ✌ Figure of speech
- ✌ Sentence length

⑧   **What appeal should I use?**
- ✌ Appeal to logic
- ✌ Appeal to emotion

⑧ **Is my outline complete and correct?**

⑧ **Do I have a good opening?**

⑧ **Have I developed the body with supporting information?**

- ✐ Anecdotes
- ✐ Comparison and contrast
- ✐ Examples
- ✐ Facts
- ✐ Statistics
- ✐ Testimony by authorities

⑧ **Is my conclusion complete and commanding?**

⑧ **Have I revised and edited my speech?**

⑧ **Is the title suitable and interesting?**

⑧ **Have I used humour appropriately?**

⑧ **Have I included relevant and attractive visual aids, audio-visual aids, and props?**

⑧ **Have I rehearsed enough?**

⑧ **Will I dress for success?**

⑧ **Will I use my voice and body language to best advantage?**

*Adapted from "*The Complete Idiot's Guide to Speaking in Public with Confidence*" by Laurie E. Rozakis, Alpha Books, New Delhi, (1998).

4.0   CONCLUSION

It was Dale Carnegie who said "leadership usually gravitates to the man who can get up and say what he thinks.'' Public speaking skills are important in the secular world as well as in business. As a professional, speaking in public is one thing you would need to do frequently depending on your professional tilt. Even when you do not give the speeches yourself, your position may entail preparing some other persons to give them thus leaving you with the vital job of writing the speech and or assessing the speakers when they speak. Since public relations is about good image and reputation, you could be on your way to aiding your organisation or client to standout in the crowd of competition through your good knowledge of public speaking.

5.0   SUMMARY

There would usually be public speaking tasks for you as a public relations practitioner. These would include award ceremonies, introductions, Annual General Meetings, trade and exhibitions, etc. Good speaking is a function of good preparation through research. After you have delivered your speech well, always note that there are things to learn from it for your next speaking assignment.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Assume that your organisation has instituted a scholarship award for the best graduating secondary school student in its community, as the public relations manager of your company; discuss overall steps you would take to speak at the first presentation ceremony of the award.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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MODULE 4   PUBLIC RELATIONS IN ACTION

Unit 1   Public Relations Planning
Unit 2   The Public Relations Plan
Unit 3   Public Relations for Non-profit Organisations
Unit 4   Crisis Communication Management
Unit 5   Steps in Crisis Communication

UNIT 1   PUBLIC RELATIONS PLANNING

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
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3.0 Main Content
   3.1 Public relations planning
   3.2 Why plan?
   3.3 How do we Plan?
   3.4 Qualities of a good Plan
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
7.0 References/further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Let's begin this segment by quoting one of the great names in public relations on the subject of planning. Edward Bernays in his work *The engineering of Consent* (1969 ed.) stated '*like Columbus, you can sail west and reach new land by accident. But if you have charts, you can do better, you can arrive at a destination decided upon in advance …. It is careful planning more than anything else that distinguishes modern public relations from old time hit or miss publicity and propaganda.*' The whole essence of Bernay's statement is that good public relations involves good planning. The days are gone when public relations activities were left to the whim and caprices of chance or gamble. Today, every thing is planned, from centre to circumference.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

•   Identify the need for planning your public relations programmes and activities

- Enumerate at least 6 reasons why you need to plan your public relations programmes
- Discuss the 3 key considerations necessary, prior to carrying out a public relations plan.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Public Relations Planning

You will understand the place of planning in public relations when you go back to the beginning of this course to refresh your memory on the definitions of public relations. You recall the definition of the British Institute of Public Relations (BIPR) which begins by saying that public relations is '**the deliberate plan** and …. You also recall the definition of Frank Jefkins that public relations 'consists of all forms of **planned communications** both inward and outward…. Let's also call to mind the all-embracing Mexican statement which makes it clear that public relations is a the art and **social science**…. The fact that it is social science means that everything about it is planned to the minutest detail. Nothing in public relations should be left to assumptions or hunches. Careful planning leads to programmes that are proactive and preventative rather than to activities that are merely reactive, or remedial.

But the truth is that not every public relations practitioner plans, much less plans carefully. Yet another truth is that when you draw close to such practitioners you will see in the results of their work that there is a lack of depth or profundity. Some do not plan because they do not consider the time and money investment worth the while; however, they end up spending more time and money to cure the problems brought about by lack of planning.

3.2   Why Plan?

As humans, except we know the reasons why we must do a thing, we may not appreciate doing it; therefore we need to answer the question, why do we have to plan?

1.   **Planning is good for public relations**: This perhaps is a most important reason for planning. Planning is good for public relations and public relations people as it contributes to the overall success of the totality of public relations activities. No doubt, it is sometimes not a very exciting or appealing process but in the long run the rewards are enormous. You still remember that old saying that proper preparation (planning) prevents poor

performance, don't you? Old as that saying may be, it is very relevant to us modern public relations practitioners.

2.   **Planning helps clarity your intentions**: You don't begin a journey, get midway and then ask yourself, 'where am I going by the way, and what am I going to do there.' Planning makes your intentions very clear from the start. You are not confused as to what your intentions are.

3.   **Planning focuses your efforts**: You don't want to scatter your energy when you carry out your public relations activities. You set out to direct all your energy in one direction. This is the way you can achieve effectiveness. Always note that scattered energy is wasted energy.

4.   **It improves effectiveness**: When you plan, you achieve more because you know where you are going, how to get there, what to do when you get there and what to do with what you get from there. The end is determined from the beginning. Planning helps you to have a programme to work with as well as the means to do the task.

5.   **Encourages long term view**: With a good plan, you are able to project into the future of your work, envisage problems and proffer solutions to them even before they arise. Who knows, they may not even arise, and that guarantees you smooth ride.

6.   **Demonstrates value-for-money**: An astute businessman would do all he can to   maximise profit and minimise loss. The chances of achieving this with good planning are higher than without it.

7.   **Minimises mishap**: Without a plan, you are not sure of anything, not even yourself. You are susceptible to the vagaries of uncertainty and the attendant dangers and mishaps. Public relations is better done with a well thought out plan that gets you result with minimal errors.

8.   **Reconciles conflicts**: Very often in an organisation you witness conflicts among persons, processes, programmes and procedures. This often occurs when there are no laid out plans for achieving organisational and corporate goals. A good plan would prevent, eradicate or reconcile such conflicts.

9.   **Facilitates Proactivity**: the whole essence of good public relations is to be   outgoing and proactive. You must take the first step or initiative towards your publics and what they stand

for in relation to your organisation. It takes a good plan to be proactive.

Other reasons for planning include to keep our actions in line with our organisation's missions and goals.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

Can you think of two other reasons why you need planning in public relations?

3.3   How Do We Plan?

Making up your mind to plan and setting the planning process in motion are not enough to guarantee success if you do not know how to plan. Good planning begins with having the right human resources to plan with. You need men and women who have some measure of experience in putting a good plan together. They must be people of positively critical minds. They must be people who are familiar with the company's goals, missions, objectives and aspirations. They must be willing to approach the planning process dispassionately and objectively. It will not be out of place to have a devils advocate among your planning team. This person has the duty to point out the negative sides to every idea, and decision. He must however do it with sincerity and ultimate good intensions.

Secondly, you need consensus building i.e. agreement on an overall direction before planning can proceed. You must all agree that a problem exists and must and can be solved. Where some officials believe that it is not a bad problem that deserves all the efforts you are putting into it, or that it is one that would take care of itself with the passage of time, then the whole process would disintegrate. To create a good platform for consensus building, you may need to work with some empirical findings from research about your organisation, its publics and other variables. Also, your public relations plans must be clearly linked with the broader goals of the organisation.

A third point is brainstorming. This is the stage you ask down-to-earth questions about everything regarding the plan. It is a time to question the best of your ideals and plug all possible loopholes. The best of ideas come during your relaxed mood. You may need to take your planning team off for a short retreat, just to get into a different atmosphere that can engender creativity. You could also adopt a planning grid which is fast becoming a common tool used by public relations practitioners for developing communication strategies. Whichever approach you adopt, your brainstorming must cover four vital areas namely:

Publics: Here you identify, isolate or demarcate which publics are involved in the issue. You identify the opinion leaders and decision makers of these publics.

Values: You need to highlight the interests, concerns and values of the various publics involved.

Message: Here you decide what message that would clearly address the publics' values and attempt to get the appropriate responses needed to enable your organisation achieve the set public relations goals.

Media: A good message sent through the wrong or less appropriate media would achieve wrong or less desired results. Therefore, part of your mandate during the brainstorming session is to determine what media are best suited to get your message across to your organisation's or client's publics.

3.4   Qualities of a Good Plan

We are gradually approaching the crux of the subject of this unit: Developing a good public relations plan. But before we do that (though in another unit), let's see what a good plan looks like. In essence what are the features of a good plan? The title of this segment also suggests that there are bad plans too. Indeed, there are some plans that are not worth more than the papers on which they are written. To achieve good success therefore, it's imperative to make a good plan and it must have the following characteristic.

1. **It seeks measurable results**: A good plan is specific in what it intends to achieve. It sets its goals in measurable terms. For instance it is easier to measure '5% improved image by XYZ public' than 'better and enhanced image by XYZ public.'

2. **Has specific deadlines** for achieving its set goals and objectives. Any good plan is time bound i.e. it should be able to state that 'such and such should have happened by such and such time. Working by deadlines helps everyone to know that they do not have forever to do the job and this engenders group dynamics and dependency.

3. **It is tied to specific goals of your organisation.** A goal that does not gel with your organisation's goals or that is at variance with them will not attract your organisation's leader's sympathy or support. Therefore, it pays to set goals that play a role in the ultimate fulfillment of some organisation's goals.

4. **It is realistic**: A realistic goal is one that can be achieved within a specified period with the resources you have on your hand. Don't make such plans that sound like 'by faith, we shall….' Faith is good but many times it is not within your control, especially when you are the only one that is exercising it among a lot of other staff.

5. **It is flexible**: It is only people in the cemetery who do not change their minds, and that is because they can't. The only thing that is constant in the world is change. Change is imperative because you operate in a changing world with capricious humans. Much as you may not make radical changes in your plan, you would sometimes need to adjust the plans to meet with current realities.

6. **It is win-win proposition**: A good plan does not seek to achieve a winner takes all situation. Rather, it gives room for all parties involved to have some share of the win. This implies that the success of your plan should benefit your publics just as if benefits your organisation. Remember public relations is enlightened selfish interest. When you allow others to win along with you, you place yourself, your client or organisation in good stead to have a good and long run win.

4.0   CONCLUSION

We could have gone right into discussing the public relations plan in this unit but you will agree that it was worth the effort to see the need for planning as well as the attributes of a good plan as we have done. Most public relations plans today fail because the planners do not really understand the need for planning. They do it as a routine rather than a duty. Understanding the implications of planning as we have just done here would help us do better woks as we would be compelled to give more time to the whole process.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, we examined reasons why we must plan our public relations programmes. We saw that it is good for the whole public relations process, it helps us clarify our intensions, enables us to focus our efforts, it improves effectiveness, etc. We also saw that good plans have the quality of measurability and specificity of deadlines. They are realistic and flexible.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the relevance of planning in public relations

7.0   REFERENCE/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2   THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Objectives
3.0 Main Content
         3.1 Steps in the public relations plan
4.0 Conclusion
5.0 Summary
6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Having taken care of the preliminaries about public relations planning, this section would tell you exactly what steps to take each time you have do a plan. As noted in the preceding unit, a good plan is flexible. This means that you are driving the plan towards your goals but are not driven by the plan. A flexible plan does not imply a pliable one. A good plan is flexible with a human face i.e. it takes into consideration the extant situations and circumstances of the factors around it.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

         Outline the steps involved in public relations plan
         Do a public relations plan

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Steps In The Public Relations Plan

Now let's get down to the heart of the public relations planning process. We shall outline and discuss the various components or steps of a public relations plan. These steps are equally applicable to campaign planning in public relations, advertising and integrated marketing communications. You may wish to make mild adjustments of these steps to your plan depending on situational peculiarities.

Situation Analysis: The first item in your plan should be an analysis of the current situation based on your research. The situation analysis contains all the information and data you collected on virtually everything that has a bearing on the situation. In analysing the situation, it is imperative that all involved- planners, clients, supervisors, key

persons and ultimate decision makers are in solid agreement about the nature of the opportunities or obstacles to be addressed in the programme. It would involve a careful and candid examination of the organisation from three perspectives namely: its internal environment, which includes its mission, performance and resources; its public perception and reputation and lastly its external environment i.e. competitions and opponents as well as supporters.

In all, you must isolate persons, institutions, issues, policies and publics that have one form of bearing or the other on your company or your client's company and determine what ways they have impacted positively or negatively on the overall success or failure of the company. This demands a large amount of frankness and sincerity on the part of everyone as it will be a strong factor in the overall success of the programme.

On issues, you would want to do your analysis on structural issues, external issues, crises (extant and potential), current affairs, etc.

In analysing the organisation, you must examine the nature of the organisation, its competitor activity, size and structure, nature of business, tradition and history, image history, types of employees and so forth. It is equally important to see the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). For instance, your strength could be that you are:

    Financially strong
    Innovative
    Have good leadership
    Have good reputation
    Have loyal workforce

Your weaknesses could be that you are:

    Conservative in investment
    Have restricted product line
    Traditional and hierarchical
    Only known for one product
    Inflexible working patterns

In relation to opportunities, you may perhaps have:

    Cheap supplies from source ABC
    To expand to a another country
    To acquire some competitors
And your threats could be

Instability in XYZ
Uncertainty over ABC
To be acquired
Unfriendly government policies

Establish Goals and Objectives: It is important to make clear distinctions between these two terms. Your goal is where you are going. Goals are somewhat nebulous. They are general directions that are not specific enough to measure. Goals are like the word 'go', it leads nowhere, it doesn't say where to go to. Goals are general statements of the outcome you hope your plan will achieve. Goals often begin with infinitives such as 'To improve' or 'To increase'.

Whereas goals are general statements, objectives define particular ambitions. According to the PRSA Accreditation Board, objectives are 'specific milestones that measure progress towards achievement of a set goal.' Objectives are specific and measurable. They can be output objectives, attitudinal objectives or behavioural objectives, but the important thing is they can be measured. They are concise and specific. Think of the word 'object', you can touch it, its there, its actual, its finite.

A good objective has the following characteristics:

1.   It begins with an infinitive, by which emphasis is upon action
2.   It is measurable. Measurability helps us to know when and if you have achieved your objective.
3.   It has a deadline: No organisation has unlimited time to achieve a specific objective, therefore it must be time bound. There must be a time when a thing must end and another begun.

In setting your goals and objectives, you must:

- Be reasonable
- Align them with organisational objectives
- Be precise and specific
- Watch out for the budget (there are some goals and objectives that you cannot achieve with some sizes of budgets.
- Set priorities: (Some goals and objectives are more important than others on the preference scale, you will agree).

Let's look at some example of goals and objectives. As seen earlier, goals are not specific, but they have a direction. A typical goal would be:

- To promote understanding
- Create awareness
- Develop knowledge
- Confirm / realign belief

You cannot however set objectives in the same way as you set goals. You must set objectives bearing in the mind the specific things you wish to achieve and how you will measure them. When the yardstick for measuring the achievement of set objectives is indicated, evaluation becomes easy. For instance the following would be poor objectives.

- To increase awareness of poverty reduction initiatives of the government.
- To get our staff to buy into the company's share as a way of encouraging other potential buyers.

These could be changed to look better, thus:

To increase awareness of poverty reduction initiatives of the government by 10%, of the local population in six months from now.

Get 20% of our staff to buy into the shares of the company from current 11% by July 30th, 2006.

Increase Ikoyi community's knowledge of our company's pollution reduction programme by December 5th.

Define Target Publics

No good public relations plan can reach all publics successfully, with same results at the same time. This means that attempting to reach all your publics by a single plan would end up in waste exposure and dissipation of energy. This underscores the essence of defining your target publics clearly. It is important to quickly make some clarifications about your publics, stakeholders and audience here. A 'public' is a group of people with similar interests and with whom your organisation relates in one way or the other, for one reason or the other. 'Stakeholders' are a special kind of public, composed of people who have a particular interest or stake in your organisation. An 'audience'' is a public with whom you are communicating.

Interestingly, these three groups change positions at one point or the other in their relations with your organisation. For instance, as your organisation and its publics get closer, they could become stakeholders. Also a public becomes an audience when you have a specific message

directed at them. After the message has been disseminated, they return to their position as a public. (Smith R.D. 2002) In his *Nine steps planning process* says that audience definition '... includes an analysis of each public in terms of their wants, needs and expectations about the issue, their relationship to the organisation, their involvement in communication and with various media, and a variety of social, economic, political, cultural and technological trends that may affect them.'

In defining your target publics, you need to determine by research:

1. Who exactly are going to be affected by your campaign or programme?

2. Who are the opinion leaders whose views are respected and taken by your target public? Any public has some credible and authoritative sources that they believe in. These people can facilitate passing your message across and also push acceptance of the message by the target publics.

3. You also need to determine the best media to reach your target publics. Every public has one medium or some media from which they get their information which could be radio, television, magazines and so on. Knowledge of their preferred media is crucial to the success of your programme or campaign.

Can you recall our typology of publics or audiences in an early unit? For a reminder you have primary audience, secondary audience and tertiary audience. In your plan, you must identify and prioritize them in the relative order of the importance of each audience to the success of your programme, bearing in mind your budget, time constraints and other factors.

Define messages

A clearly defined target public would ensure a clearly defined message. In order words, when you know whom you are taking to, you'll know what to tell them. You should be explicitly clear about what message you are sending to each public. A good message addresses a public's values and aims to get specific responses that would help your organisation to achieve particular public relations goals.

Generally, a message consists of two parts namely: content and language. The content refers to what you actually want to tell the publics while the language is the way, tone and lingua with which you convey

it. The content is like the item in the bag and the language is the container with which you package the item.

Now this is important, you can have a good content in a poor language and a poor content in a good language. When you send a good content in a poor language, the result is that your message is not understood. On the other hand, when you have a poor content (message) in a good language, you create a worse problem than you are attempting to solve in your campaign. You have feed the people with the wrong stuff! They have understood a poor message properly! Either way, what you achieve is miscommunication. All these tell us that the message you package to your publics must be thoroughly written and pretested. The services of good copywriters would be valuable here if you do not have some in-house.

Schedule

This stage requires you to timetable all aspects of the public relations plan complete with dates. Your plan could run for a year, six months or three months. You can hardly have anything less. You would need to schedule every aspect of the overall plan. You must however do this in concert with other persons or companies you are using outside your organisation, e.g. the research companies, media planners, the copywriters, media production outfits as well as information dissemination media like radio, television and the print. Scheduling also involves assigning managers for each of your tactics. It entails deciding the frequency of message exposure and what pattern to adopt from options like continuous, flighting, pulsing and massing.

Define Media

Much of the decisions you would be taking here would be based on your findings at the research stage. The media through which you expose your message to your target audience or public are as important as the message. One authority in mass media Marshall McLuhan is noted for his evergreen statement "the medium is the message". Your must avoid waste exposure by ensuring that you use those media by which you can get to your target public or audience with minimal expenditure of effort or money. Depending on the nature of the campaign and your budget, you may decide to use a multimedia approach which brings together a string of media. You may engage the services of expert media planners here if you feel it is needful. It could just make the difference in how far your message goes.

Budget

Now I am going to tell you one fundamental truth. After all said and done in terms of planning, it is the budget that decides how well the programme will run. A good and commensurate budget could make the plan a grand success, while a lean and less appropriate budget could make it an abysmal failure. A warning here: Never downplay the place of the budget in the overall plan. Tell your boss or your client what it would cost to do the programme he or she wants. If the budget will not take it, then replan for a smaller budget. You would want to budget to cover personnel, materials, media costs, equipment and facilities, administrative items and other sundry expenses. It is proper to set aside some good amount for unforeseen exigencies as well.

Communication Strategy

Remember we are looking at a public relations campaign. Any campaign would need an appropriate strategy to win. This is the section in which you determine what communication initiatives to use. During your brainstorming session, you would have decided on some creative strategies to use to achieve your set campaign objectives.
Any strategy you use would only be relevant to the extent that if helps you to achieve the objectives.

Evaluation

Having set measurable goals and objectives, evaluation would be easy. Evaluation involves regulating and modifying your public relations programmes as you progress, and examining the degree to which the programme objectives are met when it is completed. Your evaluation points would include your overall research, your messages (did the content and the language gel?), your media of dissemination (Did they help you to reach your target audience?), was your budget properly used? Was it enough?

4.0   CONCLUSION

Writing a good public relations plan can be as easy as the steps we have examined above. You must however take into consideration your peculiar situation, environment and other helping or limiting factors. What works in one situation may not necessarily work in another, but with these steps you can always retrace your steps back when anything goes wrong. I must also say that sometimes everything may not go clockwork. You will simply use whatever lessons you have learnt in one stage for another.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, we have seen the basic steps to writing a public relations plan. We saw that you must have a situation analysis, you must establish goals and objectives, define target publics, define messages, do a budget, a schedule, have a strategy and you must make provision for evaluation.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Following the above steps, write a comprehensive public relations plan for an organisation of your choice.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 3   PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

CONTENTS

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

The bulk of what we have seen in previous units in this course has to do with using public relations techniques for organisations, corporations, governments, etc. In this unit, we shall talk about a special genre of public relations. In the introductory units, it was made clear that public relations is a very broad field with variations depending on the goals to be achieved. In this unit, we shall discuss public relations in a non profit or not for profit organisation. Basically, there is no difference between the two terms. Both terms describe an organisation whose purpose is to serve the public rather than to earn a profit for its shareholders. Non-profit organisations play important roles in a nation's economy. They concentrate on areas often unattractive to the government public sector and for profit commercial sector.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

        Explain what a non-profit organisation is
        State two major types of non-profit organisation
        Discuss how to use public relations in non-profit organisations

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   What are Non-profit Organisations?

Non-profit organisations exist without an overt or primary motive for profit. They work in all areas of public life except as commercial companies. Such areas include universities, hospitals, churches, foundations and related groups that provide services without the expectation of making a profit.

Public relations activities in a non-profit organisation are often similar to those in profit-oriented organisations. Some well-organised non-profit organisations have public relations units like employee relations, media relations, government relations, community relations and sometimes marketing communications directed at their baseline causes. Non-profit organisations would usually not engage in investor relations because they do not have stockholders as it is with profit oriented organisations. Bigger non-profit organisations could have broader public relations duties because the more visibility they have the more grants they are able to attract and the more community support they will win.

3.2   Types of Non-profit Organisations

With developments and expansions in social activities, non-profit organisations have grown in size and activities in the last three decades thus leading to variants of them. Kotler and Andreason, with Baskin and Aronoff identified two broad categories of non-profit organisations namely: private non-profit organisations and public non-profit organisations.

Private Non-Profit Organisations

Private non-profit organisations engage in social-oriented and charitable services. Examples of this type are religious organisations e.g. churches, mosques, social organisations like clubs and voluntary associations e.g. Rotary, Red Cross, Red Crescent, etc. Cultural organisations like National Troupes, private museums and zoos, cultural dancing groups, etc. We can also have philanthropic organisations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, political associations, e.g. political parties and pressure groups such as student unions, women movements, etc. There are also international agencies. These include bodies like the UN, AU, Ecowas and the like.

Public Non-Profit Organisations

Public non-profit organisations are owned by various levels of government to provide one kind of service or the other for social good. In essence, they are public utility organisations set up to give service

without profit motives. Although users of these services are charged for the services they get, such charges are employed in the maintenance of the organisations.   A public non-profit organisation could be   (1) Business type government agencies (2) Service type government agencies e.g. the Police, Fire Brigade, public libraries, health utilities, etc (3) Intervention type agencies. These are specialised bodies providing special services that border on social wellbeing, e.g. Standards Organisation of Nigeria, NAFDAC, National Broadcasting Commission.

3.3   Objectives of Non-profit Organisations

Almost every non-profit organisation needs public relations to achieve specific objectives which include the following:

1. Raising donations
2. Influencing new legislations or public policy to their favour
3. Increasing the number of clients or members they serve
4. Educating the public on certain issues that relate to their activities
5. Putting their organisation's programmes in good public light

3.4   Target Audiences or Publics of Non-profit Organisations

A look at the kinds of audiences that non-profit organisations relate to would further explain what sets them apart from commercial oriented organisations. No doubt, there are some commonalities in these publics with those of profit organisations. Among these publics are:

1. Clients – the people or organisations who use their services
2. Community leaders and influencers
3. Neighbours
4. Public Officials
5. Government Agencies
6. Volunteers
7. Other groups that might lend support
8. Past, present and potential donors
9. Contributors of in-kind services

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

As world activities increase, variants of non-profit organisations are emerging. Mention some new areas of interests for NPOs and discuss what could be their goals.

3.5   Fund Raising for Non-profit Organisations

According to the 2006 records of the Corporate Affairs Commission, there are about 22,000 registered Non-Governmental Organisations in Nigeria. These NGOs form a large segment of non-profit organisations in Nigeria. Often, non-profit organisations are only able to sustain themselves by organising effective fund raising drives. To raise enough funds needed to meet the corporate objectives of an average non-profit Organisation demands proper planning and execution.

Truth is, anyone can get almost anything if he knows how to ask properly and nicely. Fund raising campaigns could be of two types, namely; CAPITAL CAMPAIGNS which are normally major fund raising efforts for big projects. Funds required here are often large and they could be spread over a period of time. You could also use PERIODIC CAMPAIGNS- these are quarterly or annual campaigns. They are directed at achieving some less capital intensive projects.

Types of Donors

Irrespective of your type of non-profit organisation, you would usually have to interact with four (4) major types of donors namely;

1.   **Individual Donors: -** these comprise of persons who believe in your cause and are willing to identify with it through funds.

2.   **Foundations: -** Foundations are established to keep the ideals of a person or group of persons alive. Indeed, some foundations themselves are non-profit organisations. They source for funds for sustenance. Most of them are however self–sustaining e.g. the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. A few of these foundations are aimed at keeping the memory and ideals of some persons alive. These are memorial foundations.

3.   **Corporation: -** These are established companies which take specific non-profit organisations as a part of their publics.

4.   **Government: -** Donations could come from any of the various levels of Government – federal, state or local. Indeed, some government ministries, parastatals, or departments can hardly succeed in their programmes without the use of certain non-profit organisations to which they are obligated to support through donations.

Fundraising for non-profit has gone beyond a one-off attempt at getting money. Non-profit organisations have evolved what is called donor

cultivation or donor development strategies which enable them to keep one type of donor for a consistently long time. Donor development entails identifying and classifying your donors based on their giving capacity. You could have large, medium and small donors. Depending on your PR skills, you can nurture, cultivate or develop your small donors to medium and then large scale donors. Conversely, poor PR skills could make you loose some of your large donors.

A second step is to develop a programme that will enable you to consistently interact with your donors so that they give regularly, a kind of "programmed giving", if you like. Random interaction with your donors often brings random funds and sustained interaction equally brings sustained funds.
In the next section, we shall look at how you can use public relations to achieve several goals for your organisation, including fund and volunteer raising.

3.6   Using Public Relations for Non-profit Organisations

We have established the fact that non-profit organisations do not seek for profit from groups, or governments to which their services are directed. To operate efficiently however, they must get funds and volunteers from the relevant sources. Good public relations can aid a non-profit organisation to get sufficient grants and assistance from the appropriate sources. Let's look at the following steps towards achieving this.

1. **Create a plan**: Planning is the very beginning of your work. It gives you a clear idea of the overall work. Research is however essential to a good plan. You must research everything, person and group that relate to your organization. Just like we learnt in previous units, your plan must be workable within available time, and human and material resources.

2. **Set your goals and objectives**: A plan without a goal is like a bus without a destination. There must be specific goals you intend to achieve through your plans. Goals tell you where you are going. Your plan tells you how to get there and your objectives tell you what to do when you get there. Goals and objectives can be broken down to relate with specific aspects of the overall plan.

3. **Define your stakeholders:** If you aim at everyone, you aim at no one. Your non-profit organisation must have a defined target group, stakeholders and publics to which it directs its messages or campaign. They are the people, organisations or groups that matter to your organisation and its survival in the very competitive world of

not-for-profit organisations. Some of your stakeholders could be internal while others could be external.

4. **Design the message:** Your messages are those things you want to communicate to your defined stakeholders. It is not enough to know what you want to say, you must know how to say it to get results. This stage, like every other must be thoughtful considered and implemented. Again, it is important to note that the nature of your message is a function of which of your stakeholders you are attempting to reach. Here, content and language are vital considerations. You can design a message of same content but different language (in terms of choice of words, diction and tone), you must tailor the message to the audience.

5. **Choose the best tactics:** The medium is the message. A good message disseminated through the wrong medium would lead to waste exposure and dissipated effort. You must choose those tactics that best get your message across to your audience. Some useful tactics include:

> Media Training
> Speaking Events
> Newsletters
> Websites
> Blogs
> White papers

4.0   CONCLUSION

With the daily increase in the number of non-profit organisations, coupled with dwindling resources available to them, the need for good public relations strategies for putting organisations ahead of others cannot be underplayed. Although non-profit organisations may be peculiar in their orientation, thus calling for a different public relations approach, truth is: all the methods applicable to profit-oriented organisations are equally useful in maximizing the objectives of non-profit organisations.

5.0   SUMMARY

This unit has examined the peculiar nature of non-profit organisations. It also looked at the reasons why they are established, the various audiences that they relate with, as well as the public relations strategies that you can employ in promoting the goals of a non-profit organisation. These strategies include: creating a plan, setting appropriate and

attainable goals and objectives, defining your stakeholders, designing the message and choosing the best tactics:

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

What strategies would you employ to keep your non-profit organisation relevant in the face of stiff competition for available resources?

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UNIT 4   CRISIS COMMUNICATION

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Crises are a part of life. Whether in an individual, a community, corporate or national life, it is common to have crises in one form or the other and they can happen at almost any time. Let's begin this unit by looking at what a crisis is. But it is important to note that a crisis does not suggest disaster or unfavourable developments. As we shall see later in this unit, some crises can be positive but if they are not well handled, could result in negative consequences. Think of a man that earns 15,000 Naira monthly, whose wife just had a set of quadruplets. How would he react to this development? He might decide to brace up as a man by taking up the challenge of taking care of the babies and their mother by seeking sources of extra income or seeking for government assistance. He could on the other hand decide to abandon the babies and their mother and disappear into thin air.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At eh end of his unit, you should be able to:

    Define a crisis
    Explain kinds of crises
    Describe the stages of a crisis

What happens when your company's product are over demanded by its buyers? Your competitor's products have been banned by a government agency like NAFDAC so that all users of the product now turn to your company for supply which you cannot effectively cope with. This is a corporate crisis, but a positive one. How do you handle it? Most crises are however unpleasant and negative and they could pose threats to your company's corporate image or corporate life.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   What is a Crisis?

Often, the word *crisis* is misused or misconstrued to mean the same as the word *problem* or *incident*, but in reality they are not exactly the same. What do you think, if a man has a problem, can we say he has a crisis? Well, problems are more common and predictable developments than crisis. They can be dealt with in a short time without arousing the attention of the public or expending much of your organisation's resources. Crises on the other hand are less predictable and could require some investment in time and money as well as other resources to addresses them. They equally, very often attract public attention. Over the years, there have been divergent views among authors and practitioners on the specific meaning of crisis. However, a consensus is gradually emerging. Ole R. Hosti defined a crisis as a situations 'charactierised by surprise, high threat to important values and a short decision time.' Thierry C. Pauchant and Ian I. Mitroff, say that a crisis is a 'disruption that physically affects a system as a whole and threatens its basic assumptions, its subjective sense of self, its existential core.'

Crisis expert Steven Fink defines a crisis as an "unstable time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending." Barton (1993) has defined a crisis as a situation characterized by:

(1)   A surprise
(2)   A high threat to important values, and
(3)   Requiring a short decision time.

Fern-Banks (1996) views a crisis as "a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization, company, or industry, as well as its publics, products, or good name."

Steven Fink further points out that all crises run the risk of:

*   Escalating in intensity
*   Coming under close scrutiny of the media and the government
*   Interfering with normal operations
*   Jeopardizing the positive public image of the organization.
*   Damaging a company's bottom line

3.2   Possible Indicators of crises

The following have been found to be indicators of possible crisis in an organisation

- The forced resignation of executive-level officer(s)
- Potentially damaging civil litigation
- Public allegations of impropriety
- Criminal charges filed against an employee
- Public questions about hiring practices
- The job-related death of an employee
- The re-election/reappointment of the CEO
- Public protests of organisation actions
- Intense scrutiny from state/federal regulators
- Intense scrutiny from the news media
- A civil disturbance or a hostage situation
- A major restructuring of the organisation
- Failure to meet organisational responsibilities
- Organizational actions that resulted in death of non-employee(s).
- Substantial loss of property through theft
- Severe budget cuts/shortfall
- Allegations of financial irregularities
- Being the subject of an unsolicited/hostile takeover
- Public health-related difficulties
- Labour unrest
- Being at the centre of a political controversy

3.3   Findings about Corporate Attitude towards Crisis

There seems to be a correlation between personal and corporate attitude towards crisis in the modern world. Several organisations devote little or no time to plan for a crisis. Some wave the thought of it with the attitude of 'when you plan for evil, then it will come.' Others believe that the crises that come to some other corporate bodies are not their 'portion', but the naked truth is that crisis can happen to anyone. As crisis experts Donald Chrisholm and Martin Landau have noted, *'when people believe that because nothing has gone wrong, nothing can go wrong, they court disaster. There is noise in every system and in every design. If this fact is ignored, nature soon reminds us of our folly.'* It seems to be a human weakness to think that if a thing has not happened one, then it is not real or at best the chances of its occurrence are very small. A study in *Public Relations Journal* (1984) gives the following report:

-       Only 53 per cent of companies surveyed by Western Union had an operational crisis communication plan.
-       There was little change three years later when the number rose to 57 per cent.

A study in 1992 by the University of Kansas had similar results:

-       Only 56.9 per cent of those surveyed had written plans.

-        Only one in three had plans that were both written and practiced. The study concluded that the more crises an organisation had, the closer the public relations functions now was to the organisation's management.

3.4   The Stages of a Crisis

No organisation remains the same after a crisis. Any crisis would usually leave some positive or negative trials behind. The state of your organisation after a crisis is a function of how prepared it was and how it handles the crisis. The truth is, any organisation must have a crisis plan, but no crisis plan fits perfectly into any crisis situation. You would need some amount of pragmatic tilt to handle crises at any given time.

At the end of a given crisis, your organisation may come out as a villain or a victim and probably as a hero. Most companies would rather come out as heroes. But this is dependent on your level of preparedness. Nothing is as good as a crisis that is averted. It is better to avert a crisis than to solve it. The old saying' prevention is better than cure ' is as true in public relations as it is in other areas of human life. With a good team on ground, you should be able to foresee and forecast a crisis and nip it in the bud before it gets out of hand. There is hardly any crisis that occurs without early warning signals. Ignoring the warning makes the crisis loom large and often to uncontrollable proportions.

Crises develop in four stages, namely: **Warning stage**, **Point of no return**, **Clean up Stage** and the stage when **things return to normal**.

Warning Stage: As we noted above, crises do not 'just happen'. Every crisis gives some form of signal or the other. You must be able to see and read these signals and nip the crisis in the bud. At the warning stage, events are still largely under control. A proactive step could be all that is needed to do the trick. It is an indication of professional expertise to recognize the potential for danger and act accordingly. When the cloud is gathering, native wisdom demands that you bring in your cloths from the wash lines, call in the kids from the playing filed and get an umbrella if you must go out.

Point of no Return: If you do not take proactive steps as expected at the warning stage, then you must take reactive steps when you have reached the avoidable point of no return stage. The crisis could have been avoided before now but having reached this stage, you would need the Wisdom of Solomon to prevent it. It is no longer avoidable, it just must happen, and some damages are inevitable, but the extent of damage will depend on how your organisation responds to the situation. You must know that the longer it takes to react effectively to a crisis, the

greater the potential for damage. Marguerite Sullivan, (p.62) observed that *'the key to effective crisis communication is to be prepared before the crisis occurs. Once an emergency happens, there is little time to think much less to plan. Without a crisis plan, you can be overwhelmed by events.'* At this point, your various publics especially your traditional publics would know about the crisis and would be watching keenly to see how you would handle it. At this stage, you must be giving information that would give a true picture of the situation; else the rumour mill would grind fast. You must have a crisis communication plan. Someone in the public relations office must be talking but must know what to talk and who to talk to. Sullivan further recommends *'in a crisis, the best course of action is to be forthcoming and honest and to do what it takes to facilitate stories. The media are going to write and air stories with or without your help. It's in your best interest to participate in a story- even a negative one – in order to have your position correctly represented.'*

Clean up Stage: The point of no return is not a total loss stage. The degree of damage can still be minimised. This is however dependent on what you do in the third stage which is the clean up stage. Here, you are attempting to deal with the problem and its effects. Making a success of this stage will depend on your organisation's crisis management and communication capacity. A well laid out crisis management and communication plan will take care of the crisis in a short time, but a weak or non-existent crisis management policy could make the crisis drag on for a long time during which much more damage could be done by the escalation of the crisis. The clean up stage is a period of recovery, it is a time to take a retrospective look at the past before the crisis and examine the build up of events to the crisis. It is a period to do thorough internal and external investigations into the remote and immediate causes of the crisis.

The last stage is that when things **return to normal**. Let's get it right, things can never be exactly the same for any organisation after any crisis, so we cannot have a situation where things return to how they were before the crisis. Usually, a crisis would leave in its trail some changes in structure, policy and even personnel. We can therefore use the word 'normal' here to mean a time when everyone gets back to work after the crisis. It is a time to see what went wrong or went right at any given stage. It is also a time to assess your organisation's preparedness for crisis. You would want to ask 'how can this crisis and indeed other crises be prevented in future and when they unavoidably occur, how do we react to minimise damage?'

All of these can be represented in a crisis dynamic model as shown below:
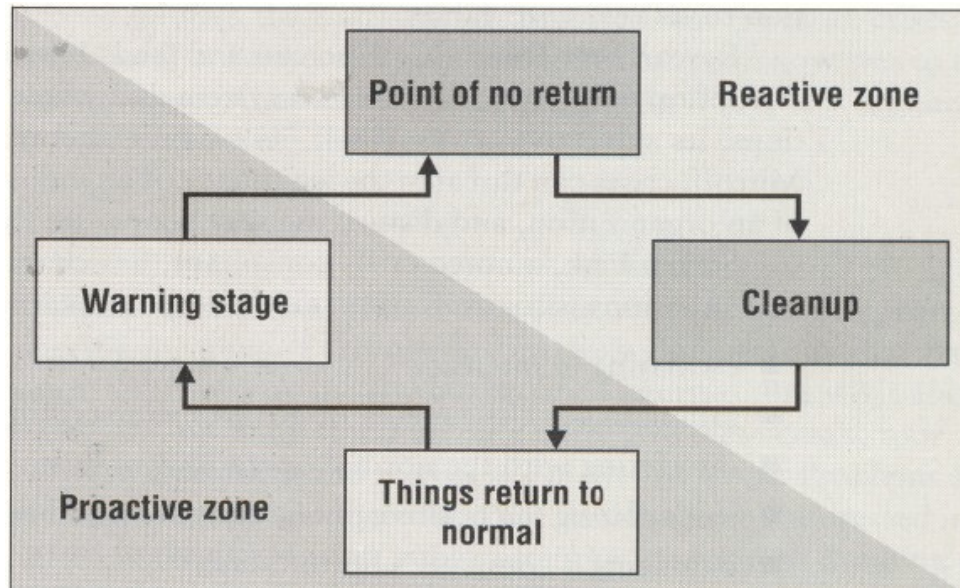
Crisis Dynamics: Adapted from Guth and Marsh (2000)

As you examine the above model, you will discover that it suggests a continuum of a crisis in a way, i.e. a situation in which we move from one crisis to another. This is true to some extent; the extent to which your organisation does little or nothing about its crisis communication and management plan. If management takes proactive steps by identifying the warning signals of an impending crisis and nips it in the bud, it won't have to go through the cycle. You also have another chance to prevent the cycle run after the crisis. If management properly takes stock of the crisis through a thorough evaluation, assessment and post-mortem of the crisis and management performance, and apply the lessons it has learnt. Except this is done, history will certainly repeat itself.

3.5   Kinds of Crisis

The nature or form of a crisis would usually determine its impact, consequences and indeed the approach to handling it. We can classify crises into two categories namely: Act- of- Crisis and Man-Made Crisis.

Act-of-God Crises often occur due to the vagaries of nature. Man can do very little to prevent them, but can prepare for them through careful and diligent planning. Examples of act-of-God crises are flood, earthquake, volcanic eruption, death, etc. Your organisation may not be able to completely stop any of these crises but with good foresight, it could lessen their consequences.

Man-Made Crises are preventable crises which often occur as a result of human negligence. Examples include fire disaster, epidemic, labour

or civil unrest, etc. You will agree with me that each and all of these crises can be adequately preempted and prevented.

Sam Black's classification of crises includes (1) Known-unknown crises and Unknown-Unknown crises.

Known-unknown Crises are those kinds of hazards and adversities that are common to a particular line of business. For instance, a motor company knows that it is prone to road accident, fire or theft of vehicle. An electricity company knows that one or more of its staff could be electrocuted while on duty, a chemical company runs the risk of chemical poisoning. Usually, organisations are conscious of the possibility of these crises but may not know when they could happen.

Unknown-unknown Crises are usually not predictable or foreseen. They spring from the blues and take everyone unaware. An example here could be an earthquake in an unlikely place like Nigeria.

4.0   CONCLUSION

In today's corporate world, crisis communication and management have become a part of those variables for which defined plans are made due to the uncertainty of their occurrence. With expanding frontiers of knowledge, companies and governments are more able to handle crisis situations when they arise. We shall examine how this is done in the next unit.

5.0   SUMMARY

This unit has exposed us to what a crisis could be for an individual, a community, a corporate set up or a country. We saw some definitions of a crisis as well as the stages and kinds of crises. The kinds of crises as we saw include acts of God crises, man-made crises, unknown-unknown crises and known-unknown crises.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Sometimes when crises occur, they bring some benefits with them, especially if they are well managed. Explain some benefits that could come with a crisis.

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UNIT 5   STEPS IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, we began examining what a crisis is and what kinds of crises there are. We also saw the stages of a crisis. In this unit, we shall look at how to communication and manage a crisis.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

        Discuss the steps of crisis communication
        Explain what to do before, during and after a crisis.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Steps in Crisis Communication

Jonathan L. Bernstein, principal of Bernstein Communication suggests what he calls *The Ten Steps of Crisis Communication.*

        Identify your crisis communication team
        Identify spokespersons
        Train your spokespersons
        Establish communication protocols
        Identify and know your audiences
        Anticipate crisis
        Assess the situation
        Identify key messages
        Decide on key communication methods

Ridding out the storm

For the purposes of clarity, I feel it's important to quote Bernstein's explanation of step number ten. In his words, "no matter what the nature of a crisis… no matter whether its good news or bad… no matter how carefully you've prepared and responded… some of your audiences are not going to react the way you want them to. This is immensely frustrating. What do you do?

- Take a deep breath.
- Take an objective look at the reaction(s) in question. Is it your fault, or their unique interpretation?
- Decide if another communication to that audience is likely to change that impression for the better.
- Decide if another communication to that audience could make that impression worse.
- Decide if making that additional communication is worth the effort.

As we have seen earlier, the best way to prevent or minimize the effects of a crisis is to plan for it and get the right people in place to handle it. One without the other will not work. If you plan without having the right men in place, the plan will be weak. Putting the right men in place equally depends on your knowledge of your public relations staff.

3.2   What To Do Before, During and After a Crisis

From all we have learnt so far, I guess you are a lot more equipped now to prepare for and handle any crisis that occurs in your organisation or your client's organisation. But before we draw the curtains on this very important topic, let's briefly look at (call it a blueprint if you like) what to do before, during and after a crisis. To be sure, there cannot be a straight jacket approach to addressing a crisis, so we may not be using the word 'blueprint' in the strictest sense of it but we are thinking of a general approach to handling crises. As we have seen earlier, crises can sometimes be inevitable, but having a clear idea of what to do when they occur is vital to maximizing their adverse consequences. Over time, I have found very useful the counsels of Marguerite Sullivan, an American public affairs and communications specialist on crisis communication and management. In her book '*A responsible Press Office: An Insider's Guide*, she put forward the following useful advice:

3.2.1 Before a Crisis

❷ Maintain trustworthy, credible relationships with the media all of the time .if you do, the media will be less suspicious and more cooperative in the midst of a crisis.

❷ Select someone to be the crisis manager.

❷ Have the crisis manager collect information on potentially troublesome issues and trends. Evaluate them, gather data on them, and develop communications strategies to prevent or redirect their course.

❷ Identity members of a possible crisis management team. Have in place their roles, actions to be taken, and possible scenarios. Have a list of their office, home, and cell or mobile phone numbers. Also have copies of their biographies. In a crisis, the press may want to know the backgrounds of those dealing with it.

❷ Give designated spokespersons training in dealing with the media.

❷ Determine the message, target, and media outlets that could be used in various crisis plans.

❷ Have a list of the office, home, and cell or mobile phone numbers and deadliness of reporters who might cover your organisation in a crisis.

❷ Have a plan for setting up a media crisis centre. This should cover such items as desks, chairs, phones, parking, electrical outlets, placement of satellite trucks, copy machines, even coffee. You also need to think about how to keep an office secure, particularly for your own staff.

3.2.2 During a Crisis

❷ When a crisis hits, immediately get the word to the press. Otherwise, the media will get their information through other means.

❷ Set up a 24 –hour crisis and media centre at a central place from which news is released, rumours dealt with, facts gathered, and briefings held.

❷ Immediately 'go public' with a trained spokesperson at the scene to conduct press briefings. Let the media –and therefore the public know that you are dealing with the situation.

❷ Say what you know and only what you know. Don't speculate. Don't be bullied into saying anything based on rumour. If you don't know something, admit it. Saying 'the matter is under investigation'' may be the best response.

❷ Gather information as quickly as possible. Determine the basic who, what, when, where, and how. You might not get the 'why'' until later.

❷ Get the government or agency leader and other top management to the crisis centre. Cancel other plans. People want to see the leader, not just the public affairs staff. Having top management in front of the press during a crisis lends credibility and shows that the organisation is not treating the situation lightly.

❷ Inform your internal audiences – the staff and other government offices – at the same time you inform the press. If the press is the only source of information for the staff, morale can be damaged and employees can become confused and hurt, especially if the incident is reported inaccurately in the press. Because of where they work, the staff will be viewed as sources of information, and they can be the origin of leaks and rumours. Be sure they have it right.

❷ Communicate with your internal audiences by e–mail, if available, or through press releases and statements delivered to each office. If the staff is small enough, call a meeting at which members of the crisis team are available to answer staff questions.

❷ Maintain a clam, gracious, and helpful presence. Avoid appearing flustered or overwhelmed.

❷ Pre-empt negative publicity and communicate the actions being taken to solve the crisis. Verify news before releasing it.

❷ Arrange for media access to the scene of the crisis. If at all possible. TV wants pictures. If there are space constraints, use press pool reports, with a representative of each type of media, wire service, newspaper, TV, radio, magazine, and photography –at the scene, writing up a report and taking picture for their colleagues. No one may use these reports, including those in the pool, until they have been distributed to everyone.

❷ Take care of the practical needs of the press, such as packing, phones, electrical outlet, desks, and chairs.

❷ Keep a log of reporters who have called, what they asked, their deadlines, what you promised, and to whom it was delegated.

❷ Always return phone calls. If you don't, reporters will look elsewhere for information. They will write a story with or without your help. Being not responsive takes control of a story away from you.

❷ Simple sympathetic gestures can help rebuild the public's confidence. Offer reassurance. Tell what actions are being taken to solve the problem, to help those affected, and to return things to normal. But first make sure you are doing what you said you are doing.

❷ Make sure the press spokesperson is involved with senior management in every decision and policy made. Every decision has a public ramification, whether management recognises it or not.

❷ Avoid fixing blame. That can be done after an investigation.

❷ Appeal to third –party endorsement for your effort. Get credible people who have been through similar experiences and command the public's attention to speak on your behalf.

❷ Update information frequently and regularly. Announce when your next update will be.

❷ Monitor media reports and correct errors immediately.

❷ Establish a web site to inform people about the status of the situation. Put all news releases, statement, fact sheets, and links to other information on the site.

❷ Establish an assessment group to study the problem and to prevent future occurrences. This is not for show; they should have real power.

❷ Remember: openness and responsiveness during a crisis enhances your respect and credibility with the media. It can help you in the long run.

3.2.3 After a Crisis

❷ Evaluate the effectiveness of the crisis plan and how people responded.
❷ Correct problems so they don't happen again.

4.0   CONCLUSION

We started the discussion on crisis communication on the presumption that crises can happen to anyone, anytime and anywhere. It is important to conclude this topic by noting that the best way to handle a crisis is to prevent it. When crises occur, they often leave unpleasant experiences on their trail, losses are made and systems are disoriented. The best way to avoid this is to envisage the crises and nip them in the bud before they loom large.

5.0   SUMMARY

This unit has seen us through the various steps of crisis communication as suggested by Jonathan Berstein. According to Berstein, you must identify your spokespersons, establish communication protocols, identify and know your audiences and anticipate crisis. We also saw specific advices from Marguerite Sullivan on things to do before, during and after a crisis

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Identify an organisation that has successfully managed a crisis; speak with appropriate staff of the organisation on how they handled the crisis. From your report, present a case study of crisis management.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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MODULE 5   PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SOCIETY

Unit 1   The Role of Public Relations in Society
Unit 2   Public Opinion and Propaganda
Unit 3   Public Relations and the Law
Unit 4   Ethics in Public Relations
Unit 5   Cases in Public Relations

UNIT 1   THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN SOCIETY

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
        3.1   Impact of Public Relations on Society
        3.2   Positive Impacts of Public Relations on Society
        3.3   Negative Impacts of Public Relations on Society
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment
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1.0   INTRODUCTION

The relationship that subsists between public relations and society is an age long one. From the era of press agentry when public relations was in its crude form, practitioners have found themselves having to give society a proper place in public relations decision-making processes. The effect of public relations on society can be understood from two perspectives namely: public relations practitioners are members of society and they also ply their trade in the society. In essence, the society is the laboratory in which they experiment their public relations programmes and policies. In the process of doing this, the society is affected both positively and negatively. The gains of the society from public relations show when public relations campaigns achieve mutual understanding between organisations and their communities, governments and the people. On the other hand, due to the profit motive in most aspects of public relations practitioners run roughshod on society's interests. This has generated lots of debate and concerns among stakeholders in public relations thus leading to the evolution of formal and informal controls.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

> Establish the relationship between public relations and society
> Explain ways in which public relations benefits society
> Evolve ways to achieve better relations between public relations and society

One of the prominent names in modern public relations Edward Bernays once observed 'The three main elements of public relations are practically as old as society: informing people, persuading people, or integrating people with people.' He added that the means and methods of accomplishing these ends have changed as society has changed.' Because public relations is part of society, and both of them are dynamic, it is proper that just as public relations has affected society, society has equally changed the way public relations is practiced over time by insisting on improved standards for the practice of public relations.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Impact of Public Relations on Society

The influence which public relations has had on society cuts both ways. It has added value and progress and has equally had a deleterious effect on society. This should be expected by the average watcher of the industry as nothing is absolutely good on its own without a flip side.

According to Wilcox, Ault and Agee, "the proponents of public relations can document many values of its work to society. The critics can cite with equal validity, many harmful effects." They added that ultimately public relations must be judged on the basis of its use to society. According to them, the following are the basis for such judgment:

1. The social utility of public relations rests in its promotion of free, ethical competition of ideas, individuals, and institutions in the market place of public opinion.

2. Social utility is diminished to the extent that competition of ideas, individuals, and institutions is suppressed in campaigns.

3. Social utility is served to the extent that the goals underlying influence attempts are revealed.

4. Social utility is diminished to the extent that public opinion is not permitted to come to bear on issues once they are made public.

5. Social utility is diminished when the origins of public relations are hidden or ascribed to other than their true sources.

3.2   Positive Impacts of Public Relations on Society

To assert that public relations has benefited society would be an understatement. Truth is public relations has in the last three decades served as a great instrument of social cohesion. Public Relations has helped governments, economies and corporations in keeping track of their relationship with their various publics. It has equally been used to avert crisis situations, provide profit for investors, jobs for employees and goods for the consumer. Public relations has also been useful in drawing the attention of governments, organisations and other stakeholders to society's less privileged persons through non-profit organisations and societies. The following positive contributions can be credited to public relations.

1. Public relations minimizes friction and conflict in society thereby providing the conducive environment that engenders development.

2. Public relations has created avenues by which the public conveys its desires and interests to otherwise unresponsive corporate organisations. It equally speaks for these organisations to the public.

3. Public relations promotes mutual adjustments between institutions and groups thus establishing smoother relationships that benefit society.

4. Public relations is an essential element in communication system that enables individuals to be informed on many aspects of subjects that affect their lives.

5. Even in everyday inter-human relationship, communication principles of public relations have in micro forms helped to achieve cohesion and understanding which have engendered social stability.

6. Public relations enhances social change. Every society passes through challenging complexities which are not easy to adapt to. Public relations provides the communication needed to lubricate the effects of these changes. Examples here are attitudinal changes like population control through child spacing and limited birth.

Discourses on public relations and society are as old as the practice of PR itself. Concerns expressed by both practitioners and the society as well as governments have led to the adoption of various codes of ethics to guide public relations practice.

Wilcox, Ault and Agee outlined three positive impacts of public relations:

1. By stressing the need for public approval, practitioners improve the conduct of organisations they serve.
2. Practitioners serve the public interest by making all points of views articulate in public forums.
3. Practitioners serve our segmented, scattered society.

They conclude that 'the potential good inherent in ethical effective public relations is limitless."

3.3   Negative Impacts of Public Relations on Society

Public relations practitioners have been severely criticized for the deleterious effects the it has had on society. Wilcox, Ault and Agee identified two major 'minuses' of public relations in its relationship with society. They are:

1. Public relations has cluttered our already shocked channels of communication with the debris of pseudo events and phoney phrases that confuse rather than clarify.

2. Public relations has corroded our channels of communication with cynicism and "credibility gaps".

To buttress the above points, Robert Heilbroner asserts that public relations has contributed to the debasement of our communication. In his words,

> "No one can quarrel with the essential function that public relations fills as a purveyor of genuine ideas and information. No one denies that many public relations men, working for corporations as well as for colleges, honestly communicate things which are worth communication (sic). Nor can anyone absolve public relations for loading the communication channels with noise. We read the news and suspect that behind lies the 'news release.' We encounter the reputation and ascribe it to publicity. Worst of all, we

no longer credit good behaviour with good motives,
but cheapen it to the level of 'good public relations.'

4.0 CONCLUSION

Discourses on public relations and society are as old as the practice of
PR itself. The relationship between public relations and society as it is
today is one that is expected o remain for a long time. Public relation
will continue to affect society positively and negatively. The negative
impact can however be assuaged through proper ethical conduct and
high professional standards on the part of practitioners and educators.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this all-important unit, we have examined the positive and
negative influences of public relations on society. We also
saw that society has also had some influences on public
relations by pointing its practitioners to the need for
regulation and sound ethical basis for good practice.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

The influence of public relations on society is a matter of
gain and loss. Discuss

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UNIT 2   PUBLIC OPINION AND PROPAGANDA

CONTENTS

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      3.1   Defining Public Opinion
      3.2   How Does Public Opinion Flow?
      3.3   Public Opinion and Public Relations
      3.4   Propaganda
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            3.5.2   Persuasion and Ethics
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor Maraked Asssignment
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Let's begin this unit by making a definitive statement: No good public relations effort can succeed without attention to public opinion. The public referred to here would naturally be the various publics of a given organisation, government or body involved in the public relations programme.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

      Define public opinion and propaganda
      Make a distinction between the above two terms
      Explain the importance of public opinion in public relations
      Harness public opinion for public relations

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Defining Public Opinion

Public opinion is one concept in the social sciences that is somewhat nebulous. It is similar to the concept of the 'common man' which Frank Olise formerly of the NTA found to be quite elusive. Majority opinion is a curious and elusive thing. Charles Frankel an American newspaper columnist once observed "Majority opinion on a public issue depend

very much on how the issue is posed to them, and the circumstances in which they are asked to express themselves. A majority today may well be a minority tomorrow depending on what transpires between today and tomorrow. "

The problem with identifying public opinion springs from the fact that few issues generate unanimity of opinion among the population and public opinion on any issue goes in several directions. It is also noteworthy that only a small number of people at any given time take part in opinion formation on matters of social relevance. The reason that could be adduced for this is that the public tends to be passive. An individual may be informed on an issue but may not have an opinion on it. Even when he or she does have an opinion, except it is expressed, it is not public opinion.

Public opinion represents the thoughts of any given group of people in a society at any given time towards a given object. It may also be defined as "the collective expression of opinion of many individuals' opinions on an issue affecting those individuals." It is "Public opinion is what most people in a particular public think. It is a collective opinion of what a segment of public think about a specific issue.'

  Another popular definition states "public opinion is a collection of views by persons interested in the subject." The definition suggests that a person unaffected by or uninterested in an issue does not constitute part of public opinion on that issue.

According to Dennis Wilcox, Phillip Ault and Wanner Agee (1992: 234), the following are points of consensus in the literature on public opinion.

1. Public opinion is the collective expression of opinion of many individuals bound in a group by common aims, aspirations, needs and ideals.

2. People who are interested or who have a vested or self-interest in an issue – or who can be affected by the outcome of the issue – form public opinion on that particular issue.

3. Psychologically, opinion basically is determined by self-interest. Events words or any other stimuli affect opinion only insofar as their relationship to self-interest or general concern is apparent.

4. Opinion does not remain aroused for a long period of time unless people feel their interest is acutely involved or unless opinion-aroused by words – is sustained by events.

5. Once self-interest is involved, opinion is not easily changed.

You will observe the recurring use of the concept of self-interest in the above points. Self-interest is essential to practitioners in determining how to focus their messages to fit the audience in order to achieve the goals of their public relations campaign.

3.2   How Does Public Opinion Flow?

The goal of many public relations programmes sis to identify and reach key opinion leaders who are important to the success or otherwise of an idea of project. Until the 190s researchers had believed to the extreme that the mass media are the most important factors at influencing the masses of the people. This notion was however challenged and discarded after the very famous study of how people chose candidates in an election. The study conducted by Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld showed that public opinion is really formed ' by people who have taken the time to sift information, evaluate it and formed an opinion that is expressed to others. This study is useful to public relations practitioners in identifying what segment of society to target for whatsoever cause they are pressing for actualization.

Another important study is the Decatur study which was done to follow up more on the two-step flow study. The Decatur study showed that leadership comes in many forms. The most visible of these forms however are official leaders that head formally organised groups like corporations, labour unions, schools, governments, clubs, banks and so forth. These leaders are easily identified in a community by their official positions of power and authority and their decisions can have very great impact on the social and econo9mic processes of a community.

Another kind of leadership is the informal type. His type of leaders exists at the same social level with the people they lead (informally). Such people turn to these leaders because they know and can trust them. They seek advice or interpretation of issues that are confronting them at a given point in time in order to make sensible decisions and act in the best of their interest. The Decatur study focused on the role of opinion leaders as they influence others in four areas of decision making in day-to-day life. These areas include:

1) Marketing: Making choices regarding food, household products and small   consumer items.

2) The world of Fashion: Deciding on matters concerning clothing, hairstyles and cosmetics.

3) Public affairs: This is an area where people need interpretation on political and social matters in the news, civic activities like election census, and other lo9cal and national events.

4) Selection of movies: Here again, the followers are not sure of which movies would give them value for their money. They have to choose between local and foreign movies, television programmes, etc.

An interesting finding in the Decatur study according to Lowery and DeFluer (1988:170) is that ' when ordinary people make decisions on such matters as what to believe, purchase, join avoid, support like dislike they turn to opinion leaders for   advice. Often, the opinion leaders' personal influence is both given and received without either party consciously recognizing it as such.'

3.3   Public Opinion and Public Relations

A public relations practitioner must possess a profound understanding of public opinion. This knowledge would assist him or her to effectively monitor shifts in public opinion, identify formal and informal opinion leaders and also reach them with specific messages.
Melvin Sharpe outlined the following set of principles to help organisations maintain favourable public opinion:

1. That the economic and social stability of an organisation of any type depends on the attitudes and opinions of the publics within it total operational environment.

2. That all have the right to voice opinions in relation to decisions that will directly affect them and, therefore, have the right to accurate information about pending decisions relating o them or their welfare.

3. That an organisation's management of communications is essential to ensure accurate and adequate feedback from both internal and external publics, in order to ensure the organisation's adjustment and adaptation to the changes necessary for longevity.

4. That, although technology may be responsible for the fractionalisation of today's society, technology can be used to reach out to these various publics.

Wilcox, Ault and Agee identified seven vital methods which public relations people use in monitoring public opinion. They include:

Personal contact: These are persons that can be reached very easily on phone or just by booking appointments with them. They include friends,

business associates, consultants, opinion leaders, customers company employees, etc.

Field reports: Field reports come in the form of complaints, questions, suggestions and complements expressed by sales people, customers and other patrons.

Media reports: These come from monitoring the media for news stories, letters to the editor, OP-Ed pages, and editorials.

Letters and telephone calls: This is a veritable source which comes from tracking the patterns that might suggest necessary changes in company policies

Staff meetings: Staff meetings often provide good opportunities to share knowledge and experiences obtained by everyone during times of informal research.

Advisory committees: Citizen Committees to provide feedback on proposed policies, ideas, and public relations programming.

Polling/Sampling: This is a planned, deliberate and systematic research on public attitudes and interests towards the organisations and its policies.

3.4   Propaganda

It would be inappropriate to discuss persuasion without mentioning a complementary topic like propaganda and its techniques. Edward Bernays defined propaganda as "a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of a public to an enterprise, idea or group.' Contrary to propaganda theorists, Bernays believed that propaganda can either be beneficial of harmful to the public. According to him, "we are governed, our minds are moulded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of…. Vast number of human being must cooperate in this manner if they live together as a smoothly functioning society."

Propaganda can also be defined as the dissemination of information-facts, arguments, rumour, half-truths or lies to influence public opinion. Another author says it is "the more or less systematic effort to manipulate other people's belief, attitude or actions by means of symbols (words, banners, monuments, music, clothing, insignia, hairstyles, designs on coins and postage stamps, and so forth."
Generally speaking, the term *propaganda* has a negative connotation, yet its original meaning did not. Propaganda is believed to have taken its

root in the period between 1572 and 1585 when Pope Gregory XIII formed a committee, the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* with the aim of combating reformation. The committee had the objective of advocating a particular view on an important issue in church doctrine. This was the sincere sense in which the term was used. However Lenin and Goebbel had applied the term to describe their own public opinion moulding where there was no access to free press and the alternative viewpoint. Indeed, the modern use of the term implies lying and dishonesty.

With the passage of time, propaganda has grown to become a subject of usage and interest. Around the period of world wars One and Two, communication researchers largely focused on the influence of propaganda. During this period, researchers were interested in asking how communication could be used to achieve behavioural change. Governments believed that to attain national objectives required the coordinated cooperation of their citizens which in their estimation could be achieved through the use of propaganda. The concept has had a large number of followership with each of them having slightly different views from others. Among various propaganda theorists were George Santayana, William James, Graham Wallas, Karl Marx, etc.

3.4.1 Propaganda Techniques

As note earlier, propaganda can be used in both positive and negative ways. When used positively, it yields great dividends for the organisation, but when used as a tool of deception it leaves a sour taste in the mouth in the long run. Some techniques of propaganda often used today by commercial and political organisations include:

1. **Plain Folk Talk:** This is an approach used by individuals to identify with low status members of the society. It is employed as a strategy for eliciting the support of this category of people to act in a desired way. I is a way of saying to them "I was like you, we have things in common."

2. **Testimonial:** It is a device for gaining credibility and support for a product, service or person. It involves using a well-known person to speak in favour of the person, service or product. It is a common approach in advertising.

3. **Bandwagon:** Bandwagon attempts to make the receiver of the message feel isolated for not being part of the train. It uses such rhetorical devices as "everyone is using this product or supporting this idea, why not you."

4. **Card Stacking:** This involves selection of facts and data to build an overwhelming case on one side of an issue while concealing the other side.

5. **Transfer:** This is a technique of associating the person, product of idea with something that has a high or low credibility depending on the intention of the message. For example Glo's blackberry is associated with top rate, very busy executives.

6. **Glittering Generalities:** This is a technique of associating a cause or product or idea with favourable abstractions like freedom, justice, democracy, etc.

7. **Name Calling:** Involves the use of terms charged with negative meanings such as selfish, mindless, etc. The goal is to discredit and make a person, or group and their cause to become socially less acceptable.

3.5 Persuasion

Persuasion is a common feature of everyday life. It is present in everything we do, from persuading oneself to persuading others. In a family life, persuasion manifests in children convincing parents on the kind of product to buy for then and even for general family use. A prospective employee through his application and at interviews attempts to persuade an organisation to employ him. Governments attempt to persuade citizens to accepts its policies, corporate organisation attempt to persuade their several publics to support them on some corporate matters.

Communication experts Winston Brembeck and William Howell describe persuasion as "communication to influence choice." Another definition says persuasion is a process that changes attitudes, beliefs, opinions or behaviours."

Public relations practitioners are among the greatest users of persuasion strategies, often with the objective of influencing people in some desired ways.

Generally, persuasion is used to:

1. Change or neutralise opinions
2. Crystallise latent opinions and positive attitudes, and
3. Conserve favourable opinions.

Persuading someone or a group to think in a different way is not an easy task. It is more difficult when the views they hold are hostile. A good understanding of persuasive communication would however make it easy to get your public thinking your own way.

3.5.1 Factors in Persuasive Communication

Achieving persuasive communication is dependent on a number of factors. Public relations practitioners would find some of these put forward by Wilcox, Ault and Agee very useful:

1. **Audience Analysis:** Every audience has its own features, mindset, and characteristics. To get a message across successfully, requires a detailed understanding of the target audience. Knowledge of how the belief system and attitude of a group is a useful tool in helping a communicator prepare his message.

2. **Source Credibility:** There are general standards of message forms from specific communication sources. To make a message believable, it must come from a trusted source. For a public relations person, this tells you that in order to achieve persuasion; some forms of communication must be handled by some specific persons. For example, there are crisis situations when your public would only believe what the managing Director or Chairman of your organisation says. Any word form the public relations director may not sell.

3. **Appeal to Self-Interest:** people get involved in issues or pay attention to messages that appeal to their psychic or economic needs. To get a message across, you must let the target know what is in it for them. They must know in specific terms what good they stand to enjoy if they do your bidding. Would it adds to their sense esteem, gratify their ego of give them a sense of belonging?

4. **Clarity of the Message:** The clearest message is the simplest message. Two important questions that would help you achieve clarity are: (a) what do I want the audience to do with the message (b) will the audience understand the message? A persuasive message must not leave the audience confused as to what it wants it to do.

5. **Timing and Context:** There is a time and context for everything. Telling a consumer of an increase in electricity bill when at that very point there is a power cut would not attract any favourable response.

6. **Audience Participation:** People are committed to making a thing work if hey had been a part of the idea. Productivity is increased if

employees are carried along in the decision making process. Getting people involved in a street march or walk for HIV/AIDS creates a participatory satisfaction that will make them donate more to it in financial terms.

7. **Suggestions for Action:** A good principle of persuasive communication to accompany the message with a proposed action. The suggestion must be easy to carry out with minimal technical or bureaucratic complexities.

8. **Content and Structure of Messages:** To achieve persuasion, content and structure must key into the audience. Communicators and writers have employed some useful devices over time for achieving this. Each of these devices must be used in consideration with other factors discussed above. Some of these devices are: drama, statistics, surveys and polls, examples, testimonials, mass media endorsements, emotional appeals, etc.

9. **Persuasive Speaking:** The use of appropriate persuasive techniques is vital to eliciting responses from targets of such messages. Depending on the audience, a persuasive message can give a one-side or two-sides to an issue. Studies by Carl Hovland have shown that one-sided speeches are most effective with audiences that are favourably disposed to a message, while two-sided speeches work better with audiences that might be opposed to the messages.

3.5.2 Persuasion and Ethics

We have examined the above propaganda techniques not to arm public relations practitioners with devices for deceiving or manipulating people. Ethical considerations demand that these techniques are not turned against our publics but to their favour. As public relations professionals, we are advocates of our clients and employees as well as the conscience of the publics of which we are a part. The use of persuasive techniques demands additional guidelines as put forward by Professor Richard L. Johannesen of Northern Illinois University. According to him, the following criteria must be borne in mind by every public relations practitioner using persuasive devices.

1. Do not use false, fabricated, misrepresented, or irrelevant evidence to support arguments or claims.

2. Do not intentionally use specious, unsupported, or illogical reasoning.

3. Do not represent yourself as informed or an "expert" on a subject when you are not.

4. Do not use irrelevant appeals to divert attention or scrutiny from the issue at hand. Among appeals that commonly serve such a purpose are "smear" attacks on an opponent's character, appeals to hatred and bigotry, innuendo, and "God", "devil" terms that cause intense but unreflective positive or negative reactions.

5. Do not ask your audience to link your idea or proposal to emotion-laden values, motives or goals to which it actually is not related.

6. Do not deceive your audience by concealing your real purpose, your self-interest, the group you represent, or your position

7. Do not distort, hide, or misrepresent the number, scope, intensity, or undesirable features of consequences.

8. Do not use emotional appeals that lack a supporting basis of evidence or reasoning or that would not be accepted if the audience had time and opportunity to examine the subject itself.

9. Do not oversimplify complex situations into simple, two-valued, either/or, polar views or choices.

10. Do not pretend certainty when tentativeness and degree of probability would be more accurate.

11. Do no advocate something in which you do not believe yourself.

4.0   CONCLUSION

Public relations is about people, what they think and how to relate their thoughts with ours to achieve a common goal- mutual understanding. Much of the techniques we have seen here are time tested and workable, but we must guard against being seen as human manipulators.

5.0   SUMMARY

This unit has looked at the place of public opinion and propaganda in public relations. We have seen the place of public opinion in public relations, the flow of public opinion as well as the use of persuasion techniques in public relations.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

According to Wilcox, Ault and Agee, what factors would you consider when you wan to achieve persuasive communication?

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Cutlip, S.M., Center, A.H. and Broom, G.M. (1985), Effective Public Relations, 6th ed., Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

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UNIT 3   PUBLIC RELATIONS AND THE LAW

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
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3.0   Main Content
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1.0   INTRODUCTION

Now we need to address some very vital questions in public relations. Try asking yourself the following questions.   Can I practice public relations and end up behind bars, in court or have my agency shut? Are there legal sides to public relations practice? Can I do just whatever I wish and still enjoy the support of my colleagues and my professional association? The answers to these questions will begin to emerge as we go through this unit. Basically there are two modes of regulations in public relations. The first is the kind of regulations that are set by government. They are called formal regulations. These regulations are stipulated by government and its law agencies for the protection of the citizenry. Here, we refer to the general laws that guide the mass media world, much of which equally guide the practice of public relations. The later part of the unit will discuss informal regulations of public relations. Here, we shall look at the place of ethic in public relations practice.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

        Discuss the role of law in public relations practice
        List and discuss important laws in public relations practice
        Relate these laws to real life situations in public relations practice
        Explain the role of ethics in public relations practice

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Public Relations Laws and Regulations

The field of public relations is replete with lots of legal landmines into which an unsuspecting client or practitioner could wade and get blown up. However a good grasp of the content of this lesson would safeguard you against such landmines.

Laws are official rules and regulations used to govern a society or group and to control the behaviour of its members. In order to do a good job as well as keep your and your clients out of legal problems you should be familiar with the rules that guide public relations practice.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Do a personal research into the history and development of public relations in Nigeria and bring to light at least two cases   of violation of public relations regulation.

3.1.1 Role of Law in Public Relations

What role does law play in public relations practice? We can better answer this question by reminding ourselves that public relations is practiced by humans on planet earth and not by machines or some extra ordinary beings from a different planet. Humans are naturally capricious and they live in a dynamic society. A public relations professional does not live or practice in an isolated world. Whatever he does affects his clients and the society in general. Again, due to human penchant to take actions to the extreme in a bid to satisfy himself, sometimes at the expense of others, there must be instruments to regulate and control human activities. The following are the vital roles that law plays in the practice of public relations:

⊡ Protection of individuals' rights and the society from human excesses that may arise in the practice of public relations.

⊡ Protection of the profession from quacks and charlatans. One of the major challenges of public relations over the years is the preponderance of unqualified practitioners who go about the job with wanton disregard for professional honour and thus bring much ridicule to the profession. With good laws, this trend can be curbed.

⊡ Maintenance of professional standards. Flowing from the above point is the fact that when the profession is rid of quacks, professional standards will be improved and maintained, thus creating an atmosphere of honour and dignity for the profession.

⊡ Law will also enhance national growth since public relations is practiced in virtually every facet of national life.

3.2   Public Relations Laws

There are many fine lines when it comes to public relations and the law. Today, there are so many rules and guidelines that it is almost impossible to keep up with all of them. Just having the basic knowledge of these areas will help you as a public relations professional in the future. Some of theses basic laws are discussed below.

Defamation

Any falsely published communication-- word, photos, pictures, symbols- that create public hatred, contempt, ridicule, or inflicts injury on reputation. Defamation is the act of damaging the reputation of a person by means of false and malicious communications that expose that person to contempt, ridicule, hatred, or social ostracism. In common law, defamation in writing is classified as libel and oral defamation is slander

Libel

Libel is a published or printed defamation. If you issue news releases, house journals, annual reports that are short of adequate truth, you could be summoned by a court if a suit has been instituted against you for libel. It is possible to libel someone both in a photograph and in a caption.

A photograph or a caption is libellous if it exposes a person to hatred, ridicule or contempt; lowers them in the estimation of right thinking members of the community; causes them to be shunned or avoided; or disparages their reputation in trade, business, profession or office. This suggests that you must be careful in captioning pictures that you use in your publications.

For instance if a caption describes two people as Mr. and Mrs. Clinton and Mrs. Clinton is in fact Mrs. Katrin, or even Miss Katrin , then that caption is libellous as it could suggest different things to people who know Mr. Clinton and the real Mrs. Clinton. An easy way to avoid this kind of problem is for your photographer to ask questions properly from people he has taken on their proper names and the spellings as well as their designations

Proof in a libel suit

When a person files a libel suit, they usually have to prove that:

The false statement was communicated to others through print, broadcast, or electric means.

The person was identified or is identifiable.

There is actual injury in the form of money loss, loss of reputation, or mental suffering.

The person making the statement was malicious or negligent

Avoiding Libel Suits

To avoid libel suits Don Sneed, Tim Wulfemeyer, and Harry Stonecipher, in a Public Relations Review, suggests that...

Opinion statements be accompanied by the facts upon which the opinions are based.

Statements of opinion be clearly labelled as such.

The context of the language surrounding the expression of opinion be reviewed for possible legal implications.

Slander

Slander is not a commonly breached public relations law. This is probably because the bulk of public relations messages today appears in written form. The truth however is that very many public relations jobs involve speech, broadcast and oral presentations. Thus, we need to examine the law of slander else we unconsciously violate it. Slander is a sub of defamation. It is defamation in words, or better put, in oral form. You or your client may be sued for slander if a person thinks that his reputation or image has been falsely or maliciously damaged in the minds of right thinking members of the society. The implication of this for a practitioner is that he or she must ensure that every oral communication is properly examined and expunged of any slanderous statement. When in doubt, consult your lawyer.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

What suggestions would you give to your Managing Director as precautions for avoiding making statements that can invite slander charges?

4.0   CONCLUSION

Like any other sequence or area of specialization in communication studies, Public Relations is guided by some laws and regulation.   The failure of PR practitioners to abide by these laws and regulations definitely portend evil for them. A situation of persistent violation of guiding rules and regulations may lead to grave consequences such as; loss of one's lincense, sanction by the professional body or criminal or court action. This is a situation every well-meaning practitioner must avoid.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we have carefully gone through the key issues in PR and the Law. In the process, we have tried to identify the role of Law in public relations and the basic elements of public relations laws. It is hoped that your knowledge of these laws will guide your footstep in the right directions in pursuit of your profession as a Public Relations Practitioner.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Before 1964, people seeking damages under a claim that they had been libelled needed to proof five things known as the burden of proof. State and discuss them.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Cutlip, S.M., Center, A.H. and Broom, G.M. (1985), Effective Public Relations, 6th ed., Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

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UNIT 4   ETHICS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

There is an innate tendency in man to do the wrong. In fact, it takes effort to redirect one's will to the right path. This explains why the human society has evolved several instrumentations by which it could make doing the right more appealing. In personal and professional life, the subject of ethics is very useful as a guide in decision making. Virtually all professions the world over have ethical standards by which their members do their job. It is not out of place to state that public relations is one job that requires a large amount of ethical standards.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define 'ethnics' generally
- Define ethics in relation to public relations
- Identify some of the ethical values of the profession e.g. honesty, integrity, fidelity, fairness, etc.
- Discuss some of the ethical approaches to decision making in public relation

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Some Definitions of Ethics

Various authors have defined ethics in various ways depending on their perception of the subject. An unknown source says ethics is "That part of science and philosophy dealing with moral conduct, duty, and

judgment." According to Lucas (2001), "Ethics is that branch of philosophy that deals with issues of right and wrong in human affairs." The Josephson Institute of Ethics says ethics refers to "Standards of conduct and behaviour based on moral duties and virtues derived from principles of right and wrong." Nelson Potter says it is, "The search for the right thing to do given the relevant facts of the matter." Wilcox et al. (2003) say that ethics "expresses through moral behaviour in specific situations". Socrates defines ethics as "How we ought to live."

At the heart of ethics is the subject of character and morality. Man has long used character as a basis for judging the sincerity, genuineness and realness of men and organisations. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle had in his work *Rhetoric* focused on the persuasive power of an individual's character. The relevance of Aristotle's writings on character and their impact on public relations has earned him many accolades. One scholar described him as 'the first public relations practitioner.' Among the highlights of Aristotle's views on ethics are:

1. "(The speaker's character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses."

2. "It adds much to an orator's influence that his own character should look right….There are three things that inspire confidence in the orator's own good character… good sense, good moral character, and goodwill."

Aristotle was of the view that you cannot be a successful persuader if people know that your character is flawed. His views are supported by Sue Wolstenhole in her assertion that, "public relations practitioners have a key role to play as maintainers of the corporate conscience and managers of reputation. Melvin Sharpe also said "ethical harmony is essential for social stability. And social stability is the mission and product of public relations." For public relations to win and keep society's confidence, its practitioners must evolve and stick to worthwhile ethical standards.

Public relations practitioners live and practice under the guidance of several ethical codes like societal codes as found in various religions in the society. The Christian faithfuls conduct their lives in accordance with the rules of Christianity as spelt out in the Bible. Islamists also follow the dictates of the Quran as the basis of their moral life, while other religions also tailor their lives in accordance with the instructions contained in their religious books of conduct.

A word or two on professional ethics. William H. Shaw in his "*Social and personal Ethics* says "Professional codes are the rules that are

supposed to govern the conduct of members of a given profession. Generally speaking, the members of a profession are understood to have agreed to abide by those rules as a condition of their engaging in that profession. Violation of the professional code may result in the disapproval of one's professional peers and, in serious cases, loss of one's licence to practice that profession."

Professional codes exist in virtually every profession as a means of ensuring morality in professional practice. However, unlike other professions like medicine and law, public relations practitioners do not have central binding codes of ethics. Rather, several groups, institutions associations and chapters do have country or state-specific professional codes that guide their members' conduct.

There are several major differences in the provisions of these codes but they all aim at the same goal – regulation of the moral conduct of their members. For instance, if a person is dismissed from the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), it only means he is not a member of the association but can practice, but in Nigeria, if a person is dismissed he cannot practice by virtue of decree 16 of 1990 which determines what knowledge and skills are to be obtained by persons who wish to practice public relations in Nigeria.

3.2   Ethical Loyalties

'I don't want any yes-men around. I want everybody to tell me the truth even if it costs them their jobs' (Samuel Goldween). Public relations is one field where ethics is taken very seriously. Practitioners of public relations subscribe to high ethical standards in order to keep the field pure as well as to sustain public confidence in it. However, several practitioners have been known to compromise professional standards. Examples of ways in which people have been known to compromise their professional ethics include:

1.   Lying for an employer
2.   Accepting gifts and or bribes
3.   Writing misleading press releases
4.   Withholding information, and
5.   Covering up potentially harmful situations

A practitioner is always thorn among several ends of loyalty. In their book, *Public Relations Ethics,* Philip Seib and Kathy Fitzpatrick talked about five duties of public relations professionals to - self, client, employer, profession and society. Another author referred to these as the five masters.

Duty to Self: If you will ever deceive anyone, never try to deceive your best friend and that best friend of yours is yourself. Therefore, ethical responsibility is a duty to yourself as a practitioner.

Duty to Client: Your client is the one picking up the bill for your services at a particular point in time. He therefore deserves the best of service borne on the wings of ethical consideration that give him value for his money.

Duty to Employer: If you are on the payroll of someone, then it is your ethical duty to do him the service as he deserves. Here we are talking of duties that are commensurate to your pay as well as the calling of your practice.

Duty to Profession: You will agree with me that it is your professional duty not only to keep the public relations profession as good as you met it when you joined it, but even to ensure that the standards are improved than it was. This is your duty to your profession.

Duty to Media: No public relations practitioner can be successful without the cooperation of the media. You may want me to put that in caps for emphasis, NO PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONER CAN SUCCEED WITHOUT THE COOPERATION OF THE MEDIA. This does not mean that the media are so powerful that they can hold you to ransom on your job, but they are such partners in progress that you must do all things ethically possible to protect their interest in given situations. This is one reason I have included the code of Nigerian journalists at the end of this course.

Duty to Society: The society is to a public relations man what the laboratory is to a pure scientist. Any careless mix of chemical components can trigger such an explosion that can bring down the entire building. This explains why the public relations man must at all times accord the society the ethical duties due to it.

Wilcox, Cameron, Ault and Agee (2003) state:

> "Public relations professionals have the added dilemma of making decisions that satisfy (1) the public interest, (2) the employer, (3) the professional organisation's code of ethics, and (4) their personal value. In the ideal world, the four would not conflict. In reality, however they often do." (p.59).

It should be clearly stated that you would very often find yourself torn in between one or two or among three of these ends depending on the nature of what you are doing per time. Very often, you would be assisted by what are already in you i.e. your values and ideals. This explains why a public relations practitioner must always be a person of exemplary character and intensions. Honesty and integrity must be practiced at all times and all acts that negate uprightness in all its forms should be shunned.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Now, would you consider this a hierarchical order of ethical duty preference i.e. would you be true first to yourself and then your client and lastly the society? If it is a hierarchy, would you like it this way or would you rather have your own kind of arrangement? Rearrange it and let's see what it will look like.

3.3   Ethical Values

At the base of ethics are values. Values refer to those behavioural patterns we hold dear as yardsticks for accessing our relationship with others. There are personal values, social values community values, national values. Personal values however form the foundation of other values that we may exhibit. Below are ten universal values that any ethical-minded individual would embrace. They are the blocks for building ethical values in other areas of the human life

    Honesty
    Integrity
    Promise-keeping
    Fidelity
    Fairness
    Caring for others
    Respect for others
    Responsible citizenship
    Pursuit of excellence
    Accountability
(From Josephson Institute for the Advancement of Ethics)

3.4   Ethical Approaches to Decision Making

Before we talk about some solutions and present some thoughts that will help you, let's examine ethics itself. The question of what is right and what is wrong is not an easy one. We all have our personal ethical standards; each of ours is different.

Let's begin with a look at four basic ethical systems: Deontology,

teleology, Aristotle's Golden Mean, and Ethical Relativism.

Deontology: Deontology is derived from the Greek word *deontos*, meaning duty or obligation. This system is duty-based and relies on moral obligation. Deontological ethics says that all actions are inherently right or wrong. An act is always good (in and of itself; regardless of circumstances or consequences) and thus ought to be performed. This system depends on the inner-based, self-discipline of each individual public relations practitioner, and because we are all human, and of different environmental backgrounds, it changes from person to person, depending on their own cultural and traditional biases.

Teleology: Derived from the Greek word *teleo*, meaning *end* or *consequences*. This system is outcome-based. Teleological ethicists believe that an act is good if it has good consequences; thus consequences determine the value of an act i.e. "the end justify the means." While this system has had its detractors, there is considerable historical precedence, and deserves extended discussion.

Christianity, for example, began with one man battling what he considered corrupt religion. Jesus Christ used what we today would call classic public relations techniques: He used the two-step flow theory of communication, He did a lot of public appearances, He staged special events, He identified and targeted specific audiences, and He adapted His message to each audience. In the case of Christianity, did the ends justify the means?

Another good example is the American Revolution. Did you know that generally speaking, the American colonists were not terribly unhappy with British rule? It took a small cadre of about a dozen patriots to convince them. Like Christ before them, they used classic public relations tactics: Publications, public appearances, triggering events such as the Boston Massacre, special demonstrations such as the Boston Tea Party, eloquent speakers, and simple slogans: "Taxation without representation is tyranny!" "Don't tread on me!"

Today, the techniques being used by Greenpeace bear watching. Only history will tell if their activities of civil disobedience as once described by Henry David Thoreau bring changes for the better good in the end.

In the TV series *Star Trek Voyager,* Captain Janeway recalls the "Double Effect Principle on Assisted Suicide": "An action that has the principle effect of relieving suffering may be ethically justified, even though the same action has the secondary effect of possibly causing death." Fiction, true, but interesting none-the-less.

Aristotle's Golden Mean: This system is based on what's best for the majority, the greatest good for greatest number. This is generally the system used in a democracy (rule of the majority with respect for the minority), where the minority sometimes has to sacrifice something of value if it's good for the country as a whole.

Ethical Relativism: This system of ethics believes that some acts are good in some circumstances or cultures but not in others. Ethical relativism emphasises contextual appropriateness in making ethical decisions. At the base of this thinking is that moral standards should vary according to cultures, circumstances, times, etc. The advantage of this ethical system is respect for cultural diversity.

4.0   CONCLUSION

Public relations is a young but fast-growing profession, but its growth would be hampered when there are no legal and ethical standards to guide its practitioners. Interestingly too, literature on public relations these areas is small with large borrowing from other disciplines. These two facts pose the challenge to practitioners to embrace and sustain high standards in order to accelerate the growth of the profession especially in Nigeria where the practice is still way behind with several credibility problems.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, we have looked at how important law and ethics are to public relations practice. We began by examining the role of law in public relations. We saw some specific laws that regulate public relation, such as libel, slander, etc. We also saw some definitions of ethics from relevant authors and institutions. We also highlighted some ways in which public relations professionals compromise ethical standards. The question of ethical loyalty was examined. Who would you give priority to among self, client, employer, your profession and the media? This was the crux of the self assessment exercise which I hope you have attempted. We also looked at some ethical values which we said were blocks for public relations values.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

A practitioner is always thorn among several ends of loyalty. Discuss the five duties of public relations professionals as noted by Philip Seib and Kathy Fitzpatrick.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 5   CASE STUDIES IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
        3.1   Analysing Public Relations Cases
        3.2   Elements of Public Relations Cases
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4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor Marked Assignment
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

A very important part of public relations training and practice is problem-solving. Practitioners and educators in public relations evolve hypothetical or real life situations to which they proffer solutions. Often, these solutions have proved useful to practitioners in solving real-life client problems. Case studies or cases are similar to *alternative to practical* examinations. They provide avenues for critical and creative thinking with the goal of solving a public relations problem or providing basis for solving them.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

        Explain what a case study is
        Discuss procedures for solving case studies or problems
        Solve some case problems

Public relations practitioners and educators employ cases or problems in two ways. First, for suggesting solutions to hypothetical problems. Such solutions can be transferred to real life situations. This is usually called a problem. Second, they could be used to dissect a historical case as a learning experience to determine what worked, what didn't, and why. This type of historical case is generally referred to as cases.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Analysing Public Relations Cases

According to Newson, Scott and Turk (1992) 'Cases serve as idea resources for public relations practitioners in solving problems and for public relations practitioners in theory building.' There are hardly any two public relations cases that are exactly the same in context and substance. To be sure, there may be very similar relationships among problems due to human, socio-cultural and organizational factors; each case usually has some elements of uniqueness that carves it apart from other cases. The benefit of this uniqueness is that it provides a platform for creative and innovative thinking towards solving the case problem. However, this does not take away from the fact that we can sometimes take a case for cases, i.e. we can employ some solutions or strategies used in one case for solving the problems in another. The point of departure would be where unique problems demand unique solutions.

As noted above, we can have existing and historical cases. Existing cases are created to elicit solutions from practitioners and educators, while historical cases have solutions which are studied by practitioners and educators. Whereas existing cases ask 'what is the problem and what should be done?', historical cases ask 'what was the problem and what was done?' In a way, existing cases could become historical cases when appropriate and tested solutions have been proffered to them. Newson, Scott and Turk further noted that a historical case can be broken down into four parts. The first is a summary of the case. Here, you give an explanation of the nature of the problem or problems the campaign addressed and the background.

The second part involves additional research into publics; an assessment of the impact of the problem, situation or proposed action, prioritising of the publics; a discussion of the origin of the problem, together with its probable causes and an explanation of what was done to deal with the problem.

The third part of the analysis relates to the concerned institution. Here, you would do a detailed description of the organization- what it does, what it is, etc. It also includes an analysis of samples of all materials used in the programme, such as news releases to all media, special coverage, scripts, posters, advertising, letters, publications, etc, etc. Copies of progress reports should be examined and included in the analysis.

The fourth part would look at what went well and what did not, and what could have been improved. Here, you must examine the thoughtful recommendations about how such problem might be handled if a similar situation confronts the same organisation or institution in future.

3.2   Elements of Public Relations Cases

Here again, we would be adapting the views of Newton, Scott and Turk. In dealing with both existing and historical cases, the elements are basically the same, but the details may defer. For both existing and historical cases, four vital elements are involved. These include:

Research
Publics
Action
Evaluation

For an existing case, the research level would aim at identifying the problem and establishing objectives. In relation to publics, you designate and recognise which are the target publics. The goal here is to learn what they know and believe and how to reach them with the available media. On action to take for an existing case, you plan ways of reaching publics in an effective, efficient manner within a flexible, feasible timetable. To develop a persuasive strategy and get management and staff support. On evaluation, you aim at evaluating the results or effectiveness of the programme as revealed by post-test research of less formal methods such as responses from publics and staff

In dealing with historical cases, the research would aim at describing the nature of the problem and its background as well as the evolution and probable cause, to define objectives involved in the solution, to consider other possible solutions and their consequences. On publics, you want to determine how priority publics were selected and how each was involved in the solution. The action element would examine the tools and techniques used in terms of their effectiveness with the various publics. To look for evidence of management and publics' endorsement through continuation of the programme or through other results that give evidence of solution. To include sample actions taken, i.e. tools and techniques.

Lastly, the evaluation element would analyse lessons learned from the solutions implemented and also recommend better ways to approach similar problems should they occur in the same organisation.

3.3   Sample Case **

MCI Changes the Message

During the summer of 1997, the world looked pretty good to MCI, one of the world's largest telecommunications companies. It had agreed to be acquired by British Telecommunications, one of its major

stockholders, for about $24 billion. The terms of the takeover were generous, and the tone was friendly. The only occasional squawks were from British Telecom stockholders who grumbled about too much generosity. In fact, the world looked so good to MCI that it basked in the glow of its new slogan: "Is this a great time or what?"

Turns out a more accurate slogan might have been "Is this a wild ride or what?" Instead of leaping happily into British Telecom's waiting arms, MCI hit the floor with a thud on October 1 when its stockholders received a letter from little-know WorldCom Inc. that contained a capitalized punch line: "DO NOT SUPPORT AN INFERIOR PROPOSAL." WorldCom, a fast-growing telecommunications company based in Jackson, Mississippi, then made a proposal of its own: $30-plus billion, compared with British Telecom's $24 billion offer.

An extra $6-plus billion is good news, right? Not necessarily. WorldCom's potentially hostile takeover campaign was capable of damaging MCI's relationships with three key publics:

> **Employees:** With British Telecom, employees knew where they stood. What would be their fate if WorldCom suddenly became the boss?
> **Customers:** Could MCI serve customers' needs in the highly competitive telecommunications business if it were too concerned about its own future following a hostile takeover?
> **Competitors:** could other major players such as AT&T and Sprint attract MCI's skittish customers with boasts of their own stability?

Meanwhile, a third buyer, GTE Corporation, announced that it wasn't out of the picture yet.

MCI had two choices: Do nothing and hope that relationships with important publics remained productive- or act quickly to ensure that the relationship remained productive. MCI chose to act. Within one month of WorldCom's offer, the *Wall Street Journal* was praising MCI's quick actions to manage its relationship with those three all-important publics:

> Employees were told via an in-house television programme and the company's intranet that their skills and excellent reputations were the reason other companies wanted to buy MCI. Translation: job security.

> Huge ads in newspapers told customers that MCI was here to stay. MCI sales representatives could even request an immediate, personalized letter from MCI President Tim Price to any customer who were alarmed by the takeover publicity.

Competitors weren't contacted directly, of course. MCI relayed its message to them through posters placed in its buildings: "our prime motive is as always: crushing you in the marketplace with better products, prices and services."

The quick plan seems to have worked. The bidding for MCI spiralled upward, with the last and best offer coming from WorldCom: $37 billion. Bert Roberts, MCI's Chairman, even became the chairman of the new company, MCI WorldCom. If employees had been distracted, if customers had been retreating, and if competitors had been clobbering MCI, it's unlikely that potential buyers would have upped their offers. Instead, stable relationships with those publics led to a sweet deal for MCI and its stockholders.

The slogan of one of MCI's competitors used to be "Reach out and touch someone." This time, however, it was MCI that developed a strong plan to help it reach out and successfully communicate with three important publics

** Note: This case was adapted from Guth and Marsh (2000) Public Relations:AValues-DrivenApproach Allyn and Bacon P. 250-251

4.0   CONCLUSION

Case studies are very useful to public relations practice and education. Much as there are no two public relations cases that are absolutely the same, knowledge of some cases   and approaches to handling them enhances professional competence, thus broadening the overall scope of PR practice.

5.0   SUMMARY

This unit has examined the importance of case studies in public relations practice and education. We saw what cases or problems are, as well as how to analyse them. We also discussed the elements of public relations cases which include: Research, Publics, Action and Evaluation. Finally, we looked at an adapted case study.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

A Case Problem

Your organisation is a market leader in the Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) market. It has several competitors striving to take over the market leadership. Last year, there were three deaths purportedly resulting from the consumption of one of your major products. One of the dead was a member of the community where your company is located. Your company has paid the sum of 10 million Naira each as compensation to the families of the dead, but they insist that it is not enough. At an informal setting, your MD had asked the families of the dead not to expect anything more. "Go to hell" he had told them. Your shareholders think that 10 million Naira is too much to pay as compensation. Now the host community is bracing up for a fight. One of their threats is to expel your company from their community and use the media against it and its products. Already, your market share is dwindling. As the public relations manager of your organisation, what steps would you take to resolve this problem.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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APPENDICES

PROFESSIONAL CODES

In module Two, unit Five, we examined the subject of ethics in public relations. One of the important lessons of that unit is that any profession worth its salt usually has one form of professional code or the other. Below are the professional codes of three bodies, the Nigerian Institute of Public relations (NIPR), The Press Organisation of Nigeria and the Public relations Society of America (PRSA). They are added to this course to enable you study them and apply them in your practice.

CODE OF NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Professionals in Nigeria belong not only to some international professional bodies optionally, they also belong compulsorily to the local professional body known as the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), one of the few in the world backed by a state statutory instrument in Decree 16 of 1990. The institute's code of practice has 12 articles which include the following:

Every member of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations shall:

a.   respect the moral principles of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and the freedoms entrenched in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the performance of his/her own duties;

b.   recognise that each person has the right to reach his own judgment by himself;

c.   respect the right of parties in a dispute to explain their respective points of view;

d.   encourage the free circulation of public information and preserve the integrity of channels of communication;

e.   put trust and honesty of purpose before all other considerations;

f.   safeguard the confidences of his present/previous employers or clients;

g.   represent interests which are not in conflict;

h.   refuse to enter into any agreement which requires the attainment of certain results before the payment of professional fees;

i.   protect the professional reputation or practice of another member, but make it his duty to report unethical behaviour on the part of any member of the institute;

j.   not seek to displace any other member with his employer or client, except with the mutual agreement of all the parties concerned;

k.   Not operate any front organisation;

l.   Co-operate with any other members in upholding and enforcing this code.

These articles are a superb adaptation of some international codes and the British codes of ethics to suit the Nigerian institution. The extra-ordinary general meeting of the institute held at the Bristol Hotel in Lagos on January 30, 1981 approved the Nigerian codes.

CODE OF THE NIGERIAN PRESS ORGANIZATION

Preamble

Journalism entails a high degree of public trust. To earn and maintain this trust, it is morally imperative for every journalist and every news medium to observe the highest professional and ethical standards. In the exercise of these duties, a journalist should always have a healthy regard for the public interest. Truth is the cornerstone of journalism and every journalist should strive diligently to ascertain the truth of every event.

Conscious of the responsibilities and duties of journalists as purveyors of information, we, Nigerian journalists, give to ourselves this Code of Ethics. It is the duty of every journalist to observe its provisions.

1.   Editorial independence

Decisions concerning the content of news should be the responsibility of a professional journalist.

2.   Accuracy and fairness

i.   The public has a right to know. Factual, accurate, balanced and fair reporting is the ultimate objective of good journalism and the basis of earning public trust and confidence.

ii.   A journalist should refrain from publishing inaccurate and misleading information. Where such information has been inadvertently published, prompt correction should be made. A journalist must hold the right of reply as a cardinal rule of practice.

iii.   In the course of his duties a journalist should strive to separate facts from conjecture and comment.

3.   Privacy

As a general rule, a journalist should respect the privacy of individuals and their families unless it affects the public interest.

A.   Information on the private life of an individual or his family should only be published if it impinges on public interest.

B.   Publishing of such information about an individual as mentioned above should be deemed justifiable only if it is directed at:

   i.   Exposing crime or serious misdemeanor;
   ii.   Exposing anti-social conduct;
   iii.   Protecting public health, morality and safety;
   iv.   Preventing the public from being misled by some statement or action of the individual concerned.

4.   Privilege/Non-disclosure

i.   A journalist should observe the universally accepted principle of confidentiality and should not disclose the source of information obtained in confidence.

ii.   A journalist should not breach an agreement with a source of information obtained as "off-the-record" or as "background information."

5.   Decency

i.   A journalist should dress and comport himself in a manner that conforms with public taste.

ii.   A journalist should refrain from using offensive, abusive or vulgar language.

iii.   A journalist should not present lurid details, either in words or picture, of violence, sexual acts, abhorrent or horrid scenes.

iv.   In cases involving personal grief or shock, enquiries should be carried out and approaches made with sympathy and discretion.

v.   Unless it is in the furtherance of the public's right to know, a journalist should generally avoid identifying relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime.

6.   Discrimination

A journalist should refrain from making pejorative reference to a person's ethnic group, religion, sex, or to any physical or mental illness or handicap.

7.   Reward and gratification

i.   A journalist should neither solicit nor accept bribes, gratifications or patronage to suppress or publish information.

ii.   To demand payment for the publication of news is inimical to the notion of news as a fair, accurate, unbiased and factual report of an event.

8.   Violence

A journalist should not present or report acts of violence, armed robberies, terrorist activities or vulgar display of wealth in a manner that glorifies such acts in the eyes of the public.

9.   Children and minors

A journalist should not identify, either by name or picture, or interview children under the age of 16 who are involved in cases concerning sexual offences, crimes and rituals or witchcraft either as victims, witnesses or defendants.

10.   Access of information

A journalist should strive to employ open and honest means in the gathering of information.
Exceptional methods may be employed only when the public interest is at stake.

11.   Public interest

A journalist should strive to enhance national unity and public good.

12.   Social responsibility

A journalist should promote universal principles of human rights, democracy, justice, equity, peace and international understanding.

13.   Plagiarism

A journalist should not copy, wholesale or in part, other people's work without attribution and/or consent.

14.   Copyright

i.   Where a journalist reproduces a work, be it in print, broadcast, art work or design, proper acknowledgement should be accorded the author.

ii.   A journalist should abide by all rules of copyright, established by national and international laws and conventions.

15.   Press freedom and responsibility

A journalist should strive at all times to enhance press freedom and responsibility.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Adopted at the second annual conference of the Nigerian Guild of Editors, 1972

Preamble

1.   Abuse of the rights of the press is punishable by law. Indeed, the Law of Libel, civil as well as criminal and the Law of Contempt, deal adequately with such abuse.

2.   Any abuse of the rights of the press, therefore, cannot be the objective of declaration.

3.   But experience has shown many lapses in the practice of the profession and it has for long become apparent that a code of conduct must be established as among practicing journalists themselves, if they must fulfil their true functions and if a standard below which journalists may not be expected to fall may be laid down.

It is in pursuance of these objectives that we hereby solemnly declare:

1.   That the public is entitled to the truth and that only correct information can form the basis for sound journalism and ensure the confidence of the people.

2.   That it is the moral duty of every journalist to have respect for the truth and to publish or prepare for publication only the truth and to the best of his knowledge.

3.   That it is the duty of the journalist to publish only facts: never to suppress such facts as he knows; never to falsify either to suit his own purposes, or any other purposes.

4.   That it is the duty of the journalist to refuse any reward for publishing or suppressing news or comments, other than salary and allowances legitimately earned in the discharge of his professional duties.

5.   That the journalist shall employ all legitimate means in the collection of news and he shall defend at all times the right to free access, provided that due regard is paid to the privacy of information.

6.   That once information has been collected and published the journalist shall observe the universally accepted principle of secrecy and shall not disclose the source of information obtained in confidence.

7.   That it is the duty of the journalist to regard plagiarism as unethical.

8.   That it is the duty of every journalist to correct any published information found to be incorrect.

PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY OF AMERICA

MEMBER CODE OF ETHICS 2000

This Code applies to PRSA members. The Code is designed to be a useful guide for PRSA members as they carry out their ethical responsibilities. This document is designed to anticipate and accommodate, by precedent, ethical challenges that may arise. The scenarios outlined in the Code provision are actual examples of misconduct. More will be added as experience with the Code occurs.

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) is committed to ethical practices. The level of public trust PRSA members seek, as we

serve the public good and advocate for our clients, means we have taken on a special obligation to operate ethically.

The value of member reputation depends upon the ethical conduct of everyone affiliated with the Public Relations Society of America. Each of us sets an example for each other - as well as other professionals - by our pursuit of excellence with powerful standards of performance, professionalism, and ethical conduct.

Emphasis on enforcement has been eliminated. But, the PRSA Board of Directors retains the right to bar from membership or expel from the Society any individual who has been or is sanctioned by a government agency or convicted in a court of law of an action that is in violation of this Code. Ethical practice is the most important obligation of a PRSA member.

PRSA Member Statement of Professional Values

This statement presents the core values of PRSA members and, more broadly, of the public relations profession. These values provide the foundation for the Member Code of Ethics and set the industry standard for the professional practice of public relations. These values are the fundamental beliefs that guide our behaviors and decision-making process. We believe our professional values are vital to the integrity of the profession as a whole.

Advocacy

•   We serve the public interest by acting as responsible advocates for those we represent.

•   We provide a voice in the marketplace of ideas, facts, and viewpoints to aid informed public debate.

Honesty

•   We adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth in advancing the interests of those we represent and in communicating with the public.

Expertise

•   We acquire and responsibly use specialized knowledge and experience.
•   We advance the profession through continued professional development, research, and education.

- We build mutual understanding, credibility, and relationships among a wide array of institutions and audiences.

Independence

- We provide objective counsel to those we represent.
- We are accountable for our actions.

Loyalty

- We are faithful to those we represent, while honouring our obligation to serve the public interest.

Fairness

- We deal fairly with clients, employers, competitors, peers, vendors, the media, and the general public.
- We respect all opinions and support the right of free expression.

PRSA CODE PROVISIONS

Free Flow of Information

Core Principle

Protecting and advancing the free flow of accurate and truthful information is essential to serving the public interest and contributing to informed decision making in a democratic society.

Intent

- To maintain the integrity of relationships with the media, government officials, and the public.
- To aid informed decision making.

Guidelines

A member shall:

- Preserve the integrity of the process of communication.
- Be honest and accurate in all communications.
- Act promptly to correct erroneous communications for which the practitioner is responsible.

- Preserve the free flow of unprejudiced information when giving or receiving gifts by ensuring that gifts are nominal, legal, and infrequent.

Examples of improper conduct under this provision:

- A member representing a ski manufacturer gives a pair of expensive racing skis to a sports magazine columnist, to influence the columnist to write favourable articles about the product.
- A member entertains a government official beyond legal limits and/or in violation of government reporting requirements.

COMPETITION

Core Principle

Promoting healthy and fair competition among professionals preserves an ethical climate while fostering a robust business environment.
Intent

- To promote respect and fair competition among public relations professionals.
- To serve the public interest by providing the widest choice of practitioner options.

Guidelines

A member shall:

- Follow ethical hiring practices designed to respect free and open competition without deliberately undermining a competitor.
- Preserve intellectual property rights in the marketplace.

Examples of Improper Conduct Under This Provision:

- A member employed by a "client organization" shares helpful information with a counseling firm that is competing with others for the organization's business.
- A member spreads malicious and unfounded rumors about a competitor in order to alienate the competitor's clients and employees in a ploy to recruit people and business.

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Core Principle

Open communication fosters informed decision making in a democratic society.

Intent

• To build trust with the public by revealing all information needed for responsible decision making.

Guidelines

A member shall:

• Be honest and accurate in all communications.
• Act promptly to correct erroneous communications for which the member is responsible.
• Investigate the truthfulness and accuracy of information released on behalf of those represented.
• Reveal the sponsors for causes and interests represented.
• Disclose financial interest (such as stock ownership) in a client's organization.
• Avoid deceptive practices.

Examples of Improper Conduct under this Provision:

• Front groups: A member implements "grass roots" campaigns or letter-writing campaigns to legislators on behalf of undisclosed interest groups.
• Lying by omission: A practitioner for a corporation knowingly fails to release financial information, giving a misleading impression of the corporation's performance.
• A member discovers inaccurate information disseminated via a web site or media kit and does not correct the information.
• A member deceives the public by employing people to pose as volunteers to speak at public hearings and participate in "grass roots" campaigns.

SAFEGUARDING CONFIDENCES

Core Principle

Client trust requires appropriate protection of confidential and private information.

Intent

- To protect the privacy rights of clients, organizations, and individuals by safeguarding confidential information.

Guidelines

A member shall:

- Safeguard the confidences and privacy rights of present, former, and prospective clients and employees.
- Protect privileged, confidential, or insider information gained from a client or organization.
- Immediately advise an appropriate authority if a member discovers that confidential information is being divulged by an employee of a client company or organization.

Examples of Improper Conduct under This Provision:

- A member changes jobs, takes confidential information, and uses that information in the new position to the detriment of the former employer.
- A member intentionally leaks proprietary information to the detriment of some other party.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Core Principle

Avoiding real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest builds the trust of clients, employers, and the publics.

Intent

- To earn trust and mutual respect with clients or employers.
- To build trust with the public by avoiding or ending situations that put one's personal or professional interests in conflict with society's interests.

Guidelines

A member shall:

- Act in the best interests of the client or employer, even subordinating the member's personal interests.

- Avoid actions and circumstances that may appear to compromise good business judgment or create a conflict between personal and professional interests.
- Disclose promptly any existing or potential conflict of interest to affected clients or organizations.
- Encourage clients and customers to determine if a conflict exists after notifying all affected parties.

Examples of Improper Conduct under This Provision

- The member fails to disclose that he or she has a strong financial interest in a client's chief competitor.
- The member represents a "competitor company" or a "conflicting interest" without informing a prospective client

ENHANCING THE PROFESSION

Core Principle

Public relations professionals work constantly to strengthen the public's trust in the profession.

Intent

- To build respect and credibility with the public for the profession of public relations.
- To improve, adapt, and expand professional practices.

Guidelines

A member shall:

- Acknowledge that there is an obligation to protect and enhance the profession.
- Keep informed and educated about practices in the profession to ensure ethical conduct.
- Actively pursue personal professional development.
- Decline representation of clients or organizations that urge or require actions contrary to this Code.
- Accurately define what public relations activities can accomplish.
- Counsel subordinates in proper ethical decision making.
- Require that subordinates adhere to the ethical requirements of the Code.
- Report ethical violations, whether committed by PRSA members or not, to the appropriate authority.

Examples of Improper Conduct under This Provision:

• A PRSA member declares publicly that a product the client sells is safe, without disclosing evidence to the contrary.
• A member initially assigns some questionable client work to a non-member practitioner to avoid the ethical obligation of PRSA membership.