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Date: 2/8/2019  
Subject: VEA 2: Grunig (& Hunt) Model of PR & Excellence Theory

**Grunig & Hunt’s Public Relations (PR) Model**

Grunig and Hunt’s PR model involves four sub-models that represent different ways of interacting with an audience or public.

The first model is the Press Agentry Model which is based on one-way communication presented to an audience in a certain way to enforce a certain viewpoint. This model is clearly very one sided and can be used easily with ill intent just as the press can be sometimes. As others point out, “the Press Agentry model is the least ethical of Grunig and Hunt’s four models because it does not strive to share open, honest and complete information with its target publics nor build a relationship with its target publics whereby they can voice concerns or provide feedback”(Johansen, 2016).

The second model is the Public Information Model, a model that shares information also in only one direction, but makes sure to present accurate information and more proof and explanation than the previous model. In terms of real world examples, “Some press releases and newsletters are created based on this model, when audiences are not necessarily targeted or researched beforehand”(Roberts). This model is definitely the more ethical option compared to the last.

The third model that Hunt and Grunig came up with is the Two-Way Asymmetrical Model, a popular model for marketing and advertising. This model has the creator research their target audience before hand in order to orient the content towards the audience for better reception. However, the content itself will be designed in a way that is persuasive and distorted in order to present a certain point, like making your product seem better than it really is.

The final model that many seem to see as the best model, is the Two-Way Symmetrical Model which is a two way communication model that wants no distortion and equal footing for both parties involved. This is considered the ideal model because it wants the content to take into account the audience and their feedback while also being honest and open about what they present. From an ethics standpoint it is clearly the best model out of the four. With the advances of social media, this can be more easily achieved through online instant feedback and replies.

**Does it Apply to Today?**

As I mentioned before, social media allows for much faster and simpler two way communication between an organization and its audience. I think that these models can still easily apply to today and the online environment we live in. Some companies will still have only one way communication with their audience on social media by either not responding to feedback/replies, or disabling them outright depending on the platform. Some other companies however, use the most ideal communications model as described by Grunig and Hunt(two-way symmetrical) by responding to feedback and their audience, while also presenting information that is backed up by proof and explained thoroughly enough.

While the models may provide basic explanations for today's social media PR environment, they do not cover it all and can be improved upon. An opinion I really like about this debate comes from Heather Yaxley stating, “The Grunig & Hunt construct needs to be put in its place within a rich body of work that existed before, … Rather than being positioned as the ‘best’ way of examining or explaining public relations, it is just one of many options within our academic and practitioner toolkit”(Yaxley, 2015). As Yaxley says, Grunig and Hunt’s four models for public relations are not the only 4 there are and are not the best for it in this day and age, but are still definitely worth looking at and continuing to improve upon as they are still very well thought out.

**Critiques**

The Grunig and Hunt public relations model is a very well thought out set of four models that can definitely be improved upon or updated for this day and age. As James Grunig’s Excellence theory claims, good public relations are very important in creating an effective organization. Two way symmetrical communication is key for this, you need to have back and forth while also being honest in order to build good relationships with customers, other companies, etc. So, I believe that the base four theories are good categories at their core, but can be improved or expanded on to work in this day and age.

Some critics claim that, “Today’s amoral, profit-lusting business environment doesn’t leave much room for the 2-way symmetrical model”(Sledzik, 2009). Despite this claim, I still believe that there can be change in the industry and that those companies who take advantage of near instant global communication to create bonds and honest open relationships will succeed greatly.

The other primary critic I found was that other models also have lots to offer and can help organizations out in communicating effectively. As Yaxley says, “My call to step away from the models isn’t because they lack relevance, it is that other concepts offer greater, or at least, further potential for interesting and fruitful exploration of the links between PR academia and practice(Yaxley, 2015). So, it isn’t so much that the four methods that Grunig and Hunt came up with were flawed or outdated, but that other methods have a lot to bring up too in terms of what can be done to communicate effectively.

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