

## **THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENTS IN A MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION**

**ANCA JARMILA GUȚĂ \***

**ABSTRACT:** *This paper presents the importance of the public relations departments in an organization in the complexity of the current economic and social life. There are presented the main expectations that the management of the organization has from the public relations departments and also the levels of influence that they can exercise against the management.*

**KEY WORDS:** *public relations, public relations departments, organization, manager, business management.*

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** *M37.*

### **1. THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENTS WITHIN AN ORGANIZATION**

For nearly 100 years, the public departments worked in the service of companies and organizations. It is known that George Westinghouse developed the first corporate department in 1889 when he hired two people to advertise his soul project: supply DC electricity.

The public relations for years had a limited function namely media to convey the information. In fact, the media relations and the advertising product still largely dominate the work of many corporate public relations departments.

But the complexity of modern life gives public relations a much larger and influential role. We mean, first:

#### **A) The increase pressure on business**

Bruce Smart jr., Chairman of the Insurance Company "Continental" saying that increasing social demands addressed to the business environment has resulted in the need for any management of an organization to have handy public relations professional advice in formulating strategic plans of the organization. As if to reinforce

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\* Lecturer, Ph.D., University of Petroșani, Romania, [gancajarmila@yahoo.com](mailto:gancajarmila@yahoo.com)

his belief Smart, 40% of CEOs surveyed in a poll believed that public relations expert must be a member of the group management of the organization in charge of making decisions.

Social pressures continue, referred to by Smart, were summarized in a special report on public relations, published in the journal *Business Week* (January 22, 1979): "This (the corporation) is assaulted by supporters consumers' defenders environmental, feminist organizations, defenders of civil rights and other activist groups. Their demands are translated into an unprecedented stream of federal and state leadership's interventions in the affairs of business".

These activist groups exercising, of course, civil rights which should be retained heed of public relations representatives. Instead of taking the defensive or belligerent, they can achieve their goals by making better programs that emphasize the role of corporations they represent as "good citizens", to emphasize that they have rights in a democracy and to seek common terms to negotiate with those who accuse.

There are other factors that contributed to the appreciation of public relations activities, including:

- a) greater competition from foreign firms;
- b) tougher takeover attempts by other companies;
- c) more careful eye of the media which often point out the need for sincerity, honesty and transparency.

#### **B) The position of activist**

In business, many companies have abandoned the passivity themselves assuming the role of activists. They are among the most aggressive MOBIL OIL, who spent more than a decade for the production of commercials, as advocated in favor and against criticism.

When the company management began to feel frustrated with the way in which TV networks showed the company's earnings, she has developed an advertising program by presenting the percentage of profit of three commercial TV networks in the same period. The company had lower profits than any of them.

Those TV networks have refused to present that film advertising claiming that he would stir up controversy and would fall under the provisions of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC respectively). TV networks have not yielded even after MOBIL OIL undertook to pay the costs they would incur labor gathering of evidence to prove that the letters are false media. Therefore, the company published full-page advertisement in various newspapers with the same message.

Another case is related to Bechtel Powern. It was accused by a monthly publication (entitled "Mother Jones" and having unmasked character) as having links with the CIA. Through public relations department of the company dismantled the accusations point by point and heavily publicized this disclaimer. Another company, "Illinois Power" paid to produce a 45 minute video cassettes which belied the information contained in a program CBS called "six minutes" on the topic of costs that are involved in building activity stations monthly.

A corporate public relations department should attract media attention when mistakes are made on items broadcast or published. The public relations representative

must apply the firm publishing or radio and TV coverage grossest mistakes that put in a bad light organization. Some newspapers have a place intended denials.

A letter to the editor is another way to put things right. Regrettably radio and TV networks have not created a similar mechanism.

The 80s were characterized by the fact that all organizations had to formulate policies that serve the public interest and which can be defended on the "market" public opinion. At that time staff recognized that public relations executives considered a viable tool for solving problems and teaser. If practiced dignified and smart public relations can help (organization, institution, company, corporation, etc.) to operate more efficiently in an environment characterized by seizures.

## **2. EXPECTATIONS LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENTS**

Currently, the top leadership of corporations expected much more from his department public relations than just press releases or forms of contact with the media. These concern the following issues:

A. Data Analysis - Members of the public relations department should act as information analysts and publishers to inform customers invited to a round of talks (negotiations) or other public events. They must be able to interpret corporate philosophy for people and people for corporate philosophy.

B. Driving Issues – the public relations staff must record and interpret social trends and then to anticipate problems before they reach the true conflicts. Indeed, the Task Force on the Status and Role of Public Relations formed by PRSA in 1980, pointed out: "... The most important quality of a specialist in public relations is the ability to anticipate and shape events and not to sense and report what is already known. When an organization is faced with the reaction of the public and its customers it is already too late public relations can still fix something. Of course it is important to deal with ongoing events, but more importantly, you can shape and direct future attitudes. "

C. Education – the public relations staff play an important educational role in understanding by management of how the media works and the role it fulfills in society.

D. Training – the public relations staff advise management on how they can provide, effectively, the public position of the organization.

E. Management specialist – the public relations staff, at least one aspiring to a post decision in an organization need to understand concepts like: management by objectives, resource allocation, supervision of staff and use of communication tools, superior terms of performance.

The well known magazine "Business Week" summarizes the objective and structure of a public relations department so: "People who work in the public relations endeavor to give intellectual content of their work. They further and further away from the style that has characterized the work until recently and trying to adopt long-term planning and other means related to modern management. During this process develops

new concepts of what are public relations beyond the traditional functions of the media, the community, employees and financial relations ".

General Motors, one of the largest corporations in the world has a public relations staff consists of over 300 people and a wide variety of positions, depending on the geographical layout and branches. Each branch, such as Buick and Saignaw Steering Gear Division has its own public relations director.

General Electric - another giant corporation has several hundred employees in various public relations functions.

The reader should not be deceived by these examples, in terms of size public relations departments of US companies. There are corporations with turnovers of millions of dollars that have small public relations departments. Most officials working in the public relations departments consist of up to ten people.

The public relations staff within an organization can act in a dispersed way, so it is difficult to assess how its work is extended. Some may work in marketing departments or personnel, as communication specialists dealing with circulars and brochures. Others may work in advertising, exclusively for commercial products. Decentralizing public relations tool and frictions that arise from this issue will be presented later in this chapter.

The traditional management theory divides the organization after following tracking features management objectives:

- a) suggestions, recommendations and advice (the staff function);
- b) supervision, delegation of authority and mission work (the line function).

A person of tracking targets manage through supervision, delegation of authority and mission work, such as vice president of manufacturing activity, dealing with the objectives of an organization such as, for example, the management and marketing of microcomputers (PCs -hate).

A director with such a function does this by the delegating authority, appointment and supervision of projects. For example, workers on the assembly lines. On the other hand, an official tracking objectives of management through suggestions, recommendations and advice, indirectly influences the work of others.

According to the accepted theory of the modern management, the public relations is one such of the function (providing suggestions, recommendations and advice). The public relations staff consists of the number of experts in communication. Managers are responsible for exercising supervision, delegation of authority and mission work; including president of the organization, is based on public relations staff for preparing and processing information, making recommendations and making communication program by which to apply your organization's policies.

The public relations staff can learn, for example through a survey, people have vague knowledge about the company's products. To resolve this situation, the public relations department senior management may recommend the establishment of a permanent exhibition in which to do demonstrations of the company's products and where to provide the public with various entertainment opportunities.

It should be stressed that the department recommends such action: it has the authority to decide on setting up of such exhibitions or require the collaboration of

other departments in the company. If you obtain the management approval, the department can assume the responsibility for organizing such an action. The top leadership, composed by managers with tracking features work objectives, has the authority to require all the departments to work together and achieve that action.

### **3. THE LEVELS OF INFLUENCE OVER THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENTS**

Although the public relations departments can operate only with the approval of top management levels of influence that they can exert quite different. These levels of influence will be presented briefly below:

#### **A. Free access to driving**

The power and influence of public relations department derives typically from free access to leadership that makes use of the advice and recommendations received for formulating company policy.

This is why public relations (as well as other features that gives suggestions, recommendations and advice) are placed in high positions of leadership. Top management appeals to them for ascertaining reports and recommendations on issues that concern the entire company. Currently, the public acceptance or refusal of a proposed corporate policy making level is a factor as important as its technical or financial stability.

For example, organization of GENERAL MOTORS consider public relations as a group of specialists dealing with company policy formulation and that is subordinate to the executive committee consists of the chairman and members of the company's most important governing board.

Other groups involved in the policy formulation of the company, with a similar status, the public relations department are technical, marketing, personnel and research. All these groups have functions with a direct influence over every aspect of the company's activity.

#### **B. The levels of influences**

Management experts say that having specificity functions to provide suggestions, recommendations and advice within an organization acting at different levels of influence and authority. At the lowest level, these functions can only be advisory: management surveillance functions, delegation of authority and mission work are not obliged to follow the recommendations and, much less, to request them.

The public relations, which are limited exclusively to consulting, are often ineffective when the credibility of an organization is decline. This is because the top leadership did not accept the recommendations of experts or can not requested them.

Johnson & Johnson Company granted a special status in the public relations staff. TYLENOL crisis triggered following the death of seven people who swallowed cyanide capsules with aspirin Otavi is a good example. On the recommendation of public relations firm representatives quickly responded by withdrawing from the market the entire amount of the product.

In this case, the public relations have been in a position of binding advice. With this concept the organization's policy requires the senior management (to

supervise) that, at least, to heed public relations experts before taking a decision. Two American professors, authors of a management manual, say the following: "Such a process management no means limited possibilities to act according to their own beliefs instead cause it to hear the opinions of specialists in public relations."

Within an organization, another level of the authority advisory relationship is called cooperative. For example, a polling operative who wants to publish a brochure can not do this unless he has the approval of the public relations department of the company for the presentation and multiplication.

If disputes arise, the parties must reach an agreement before starting work. Many companies use this method to prevent dissemination (by departments and sections) of material that is not consistent with company standards. In addition, the company must ensure that the trademark is used properly so as to be protected.

However, the authority may limit freedom cooperative public relations departments. The policy of many companies is to require the approval of legal staff any articles published in journals company employees or any statement to the media. The material may not be published before they have juridical approval and public relations.

Limiting occurs even stronger when legal department has authority to order the release or modification reportedly without the consent of public relations. This is why newspaper publishers find that some media outlets are full of "avocațisme" so unreadable.

### **C. Sources of friction**

Frictions are inevitable, between the supervising authority delegation and missions work and the suggestions, recommendations and advice.

The problems resulting from the personality conflicts, orientation and function. The research has shown that those in charge of supervision, delegation of authority and tasks of work are more concerned about the progress of the company and their future is closely linked to the loyalty shown to the organization. On the other hand, those dealing with the suggestions, recommendations and advice are more interested in professional progress be it engineering, scientific research, advertising, marketing or public relations. They identify with the profession rather than the organization.

One of the major sources of friction is that, in the establishment, functions of dealing with recommendations, suggestions and advice are greater than the functions of supervision, delegation of authority and missions work, and in addition, enjoys a direct communication relationship with management.

They have often an unofficial authority in that those in leadership take into account what they have ordered. Their recommendations, which were accepted by management, are effective in defining policies that executive in charge of supervision, delegation of authority and mission work must carry them out.

The legal staff dealing with the possible effect of any public statements on a work in progress or imminent. As a result, his lawyers are often those from public relations to feel frustrated because they require revision, sometimes exaggerated, reportedly release.

Lawyers who take place in court, but those from public relations endeavor to represent the organization to the "court of public opinion".

The personnel departments (human resources) are often in conflict with the public relations trying to decide who can communicate with employees.

The personnel managers believe that should lead the flow of information and the public relations of the claim that you can not conduct a foreign public relations if not performed at the same time and effective communication with employees. Unfortunately, many executives personally do not have a very good communication skills and can not understand how lack of information may be at the origin of the rumors or moral issues.

Between advertising and the public relations departments there is often friction generated by competition for obtaining the funds needed to communicate with the outside. The approach to the problem of communication by the advertising could be evidenced by the question: WILL IT SELL? Those from public relations ask conquering public opinion?

This difference in orientation is acute because of the frequent short circuit coordination of the overall strategy. The marketing departments also compete with public relations departments for funds, this emphasis on product advertising.

The following suggestions may help avoid the formation of friction between the departments:

- a) The representatives of the departments should be part of various important committees, which enable them to exchange the information;
- b) The heads of the departments should have equivalent functions, that none may usurp the other;
- c) All the heads of the departments should be subordinate to the same superior head so before the ministry decision to be weighed every respect;
- d) The regular contacts, unofficial representatives of all the departments can contribute to gaining respect and mutual trust;
- e) The responsibilities of each department should be in writing.

In this way would avoid any conflict concerning the problem lies, whose department the authority communicate with the employees or modify a news story.

In any modern organization, the public relations is a management function, as well as suggestions, recommendations and advice. Their power and influence is correlated with two factors:

- the first factor, was pointed out earlier, in the fact that the public relations are effectively only if the head has free access to management and is represented in the main committees for implementation of the company policy. The ideal is that the public relations department has a mandatory advisory role.
- the second factor is that the head of the public relations function is equal in status and the heads of the other departments. The main idea is that all have the same title.

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