

What is Public Relations?

Everything you need to know about public relations. Public relation is an important element in the promotion mix.

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Most of the multinational companies have its public relation department that makes all effort to monitor the attitude and perceptions of customers.

Public relations (PR) refer to the variety of activities conducted by a company to promote and protect the image of the company, its products and policies in the eyes of the public.

Thus it aims to manage public opinion of the organization. Public relations encompasses a broad range of activities. The major areas are discussed below, with particular attention given to those used most frequently in brand communication campaigns.

Learn about:- 1. Meaning of Public Relations 2. Definition of Public Relations 3. Objectives 4. Features 5. Functions 6. Types 7. Areas 8. Role 9. Tools 10. Public Relation in Marketing 11. Advantages and Disadvantages.

What is Public Relations? – Meaning, Definitions, Objectives, Features, Functions, Types, Areas, Role, Tools and Advantages

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What is Public Relations

Public relations consists number of programme to protect company's image and its particular product image.

Public relation is an important element in the promotion mix. In the era of globalization, the most of the multinational companies make concrete efforts to manage and maintain its relationships with its customers. Most of the multinational companies have its public relation department that makes all effort to monitor the attitude and perceptions of customers.

It is used to distribute and communicate all the necessary information to build up good reputation in the mind of the public. An efficient and good public relation department use to adopt positive programs for this purpose and always emphasize to eliminate negative publicity arises due to questionable practices.

It is used to perform following functions:

- (1) Press relations – To put information about organization in a very positive way.
- (2) Publicity of Product – It can be done by publicising the events to make publicity of Products.
- (3) Effective Communication – It is necessary to create and promote understanding of the organisation. It can be obtained through internal and external communication.
- (4) To Promote Lobbying – It necessary to deal with legislators or government as to encourage or discourage a particular legislation or regulation.

(5) Counseling – It is to advise the management about public issues, position of the company and image during the good and bad times. Public relations are a broad set of communication activities used to create and maintain favourable relations between the organisation and its publics. Customers, employees, stockholders, government are officials and society.

Public relations started as publicity, but today its scope has enlarged to an extent that it is being defined as “helping an organisation and its public adapt mutually to each other”. The focus in this management function is on mutual accommodation rather than a one sided imposition of a view point. Perhaps, it’s only because of this reason the scope of the PR has become so broad and wide.

Further, the use of variety of terms as substitutes or euphemisms – such as corporate communication, corporate affairs, public affairs, has caused confusions about what PR is and what is not.

Conventionally, Public Relations department was considered to be a small appendage to a large corporation with four major functional areas; Finance, Operations, Marketing and Personnel or Human Resource Management. In such corporations, all such activity, as not specifically falling under the jurisdictions of any functional department was given to the PR department. However, today there is increasing realisation on “Relations”.

The PR department is in constant interaction with all other functional departments. For example, financial PR helps in resource mobilisation; labour relations for shop floor productivity; consumer relations for better understanding of customer needs; and employee relations for morale and team building. Not only this, today PR helps in strategy formulations and organisational policies as this is the department which work as the bridge between various publics of the organisations and the various functional departments.

What is Public Relations – Definitions: Public Association Relations, Chartered Institute of Public

Relations, Edward Barney, Mr. John E. Marston and a Few Others

Public relations (PR) refer to the variety of activities conducted by a company to promote and protect the image of the company, its products and policies in the eyes of the public. Thus it aims to manage public opinion of the organisation.

1. Most organisations either have a separate department or hire services of professional agencies to manage public relations of the organisation.
2. The public relation department manages PR to generate positive publicity and improve public image through news, speeches or messages from the top management, organises events like 'Founder Day', 'Sports event', 'annual award programme', charity functions etc. to.
3. They also advise top management to adopt such norms which adds to public image of the organisation.

ADVERTISEMENTS:

4. The events held by PR department aims to strengthen relationships and build reputation amongst all stakeholders like customers, employees, shareholders, suppliers, investors etc.
5. Public relations involves tactics like offering information to independent media sources and a mix of promoting specific products, services and events to promote the overall brand of an organisation.

Few definitions of public relations:

“The art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisational leaders and implementing planned programme of action which will serve both the organisation and the public interest.” -Public Association Relations

“A strategic management function that adds value to an organisation by helping it to manage its reputation.” -The Chartered Institute of Public Relations.

Public relations have now become an important marketing function. The total process of building goodwill towards a business enterprise and securing a bright public image of the company is called public relations. It creates a favourable atmosphere for conducting business.

According to Edward Barney, “Public relations are the attempt by information, persuasion, adjustment, to engineer public support for an activity, a cause, movement or an institution.”

Thus, in this sense, Public Relations are a mode of getting public support for an activity or a movement.

Mr. John E. Marston has developed Public Relations as a management function. According to him, “Public Relations are the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an organisation with the public interest and executes a programme of action and communication to earn public understanding and acceptance.”

Thus, Public Relations is a form of communication. Public Relations, as with advertising is carried on with target groups. Engel, Warshaw and Kinnear who are marketing communication experts have identified five significant targets for Public Relations efforts- 1. Customers 2. Employees 3. Suppliers 4. Stock Holders 5. Community.

Now Public Relations has developed as a profession in India and has contributed a lot for the development of industrial and social relations. Public Relations techniques are being used to solve various corporate problems.

The main responsibility of public relations is to communicate the policies, practices, problems and performances to the public and to feedback public opinions, and suggestions to the top management so that a mutual understanding may be established between the organisation and its public, i.e. shareholders, dealers, customers, general public, government employees and the press.

What is Public Relations – 5 Major Objectives

Department of public relations aims to develop the positive image of the company, its products and policies.

It achieves following objectives for the organisation:

(i) It facilitates smooth functioning of business and achievement of organisational objectives.

(ii) It builds corporate image and creates a favourable impression and creditability of company's products.

(iii) It helps in launch of new products and maintain interest and confidence in the existing products.

(iv) It acts as a supplement to advertising in promoting existing and new products. Thus, it helps business and its associates to sell products easily.

(v) It lowers the promotional cost as it has to simply maintain staff to develop and circulate information with media or manage events.

What is Public Relations – 5 Important Features: Saturation of Effort, Can be Targeted, Relatively Low Cost, Relatively Uncontrollable and Credibility

1. Saturation of Effort:

Organisations competing for a finite amount of media attention puts pressure on the public relations effort to be better than that of competitors. There can be no guarantee that PR activity will have any impact on the targets at whom it is aimed.

2. Can be Targeted:

To a small specialised audience public relations activities can be targeted assuming if the right media vehicle is used.

3. Relatively Low Cost:

It is much cheaper, in terms of cost per person reached, than any other type of promotion. Apart from nominal production costs, much PR activity can be carried out at almost no cost, in marked contrast to the high cost of buying space or time in the main media.

4. Relatively Uncontrollable:

A company has only a little direct control over the proceedings of public relations activity. If successful, a press release may be printed in full, although there can be no control over where or when it is printed. A press release can be misinterpreted and result may be unfavourable news coverage. This is in contrast to advertising, where an advertiser can exercise considerable control over the content placing, and timing of an advert.

5. Credibility:

PR activity results in a high degree of credibility as compared to other promotional sources like advertising. As the audience may regard such a message as joining from an apparently impartial and non-commercial source. Where information is presented as news, readers or viewers may be less critical of it than if it is presented as an advertisement, which they may presume to be biased.

What is Public Relations – Functions: Community Relations, Employee Relations, Customer Relations, Financial Relations, Crisis Communication and a Few Others

Function # 1. Community Relations:

A business should be seen as a responsible citizen of the community it operates in. A comprehensive community relation programme should focus on building a respectable image for the company in the community in the long run. Many organizations implement educational and health related programmes for improving quality of life of the community members. Such activities help to build their reputation along with benefiting the society.

Function # 2. Employee Relations:

Employees are the most valuable assets of the company and the organization had to create employee goodwill for maintaining a loyal workforce. Loyal employees are more productive and interested in the well-being of the company.

Function # 3. Customer Relations:

The most important component of external public is the customer. The customer is the reason behind the existence of the organization. Public relations informs the customer about introduction of new products or changes in existing ones. Public relations plays a crucial role in attracting the attention of the buyer towards the company's offerings and helps to differentiate the product from those of its competitors.

Function # 4. Financial Relations:

A segment of the company's public consists of those individuals and institutions the company has financial dealings with. These include the shareholders, creditors, potential investors, banks, financial analysts, etc.

These parties have to be informed about the company's finances, plans for expansions, plans to raise share capital, etc. A well planned financial relations programme is necessary to improve the organization's image and increase the value of its stock.

Function # 5. Political and Government Relations:

The Company has to function under the control of government rules and regulations. It has to forge proper relations with various government officials and political parties to ensure smooth functioning of the enterprise.

Function # 6. Crisis Communication:

The role of public relations takes on vital significance during crisis situations like an accident, financial scams, bankruptcies, etc. It is the responsibility of the public relations to give the honest and accurate information to the concerned publics and assure them of remedial measures taken to control the crisis.

What is Public Relations – Types: Counseling, Research, Media Relations and Publicity

Public relations encompasses a broad range of activities. The major areas are discussed below, with particular attention given to those used most frequently in brand communication campaigns.

Type # 1. Counseling:

Public relations managers in the most successful communication programs serve a very important advisory role to senior management. They make recommendations on policy issues as well as decisions related specifically to communication.

Type # 2. Research:

Companies practicing either of the two-way models of public relations make extensive use of research to better understand and influence publics.

Type # 3. Media Relations:

Press coverage is a critically important public relations output. Public relations specialists use publicity efforts to try to get coverage in the print and broadcast media. They also respond to requests for information or comment from, journalists working on stories that concern their company or the company's products and services. Media relations activities might also include arranging press tours of manufacturing facilities, press conferences to announce new product introductions, and coverage of the corporation's annual stockholders meeting.

Type # 4. Publicity:

Publicity is defined by David Yale as "supplying information that is factual, interesting, and newsworthy to media not controlled by you". A critical aspect of marketing public relations, publicity is described as "the process of planning, executing and evaluating programs that encourage purchase and consumer satisfaction through credible communication of information and impressions that identify companies and their products with the needs, wants, concerns and interests of consumers."

Marketing public relations involves activities related to persuading customer and prospects to buy (or continue to buy) the firm's products and services.

Following are the prominent tools of publicity:

i. Press Releases:

The press release is the basic building block of a publicity program concerned with story placement. This is where the important information about the product or service is summarized in a way

that will catch the media's attention. Just as the marketer would customize the advertising message for each target, he needs to customize press releases for the various media he contacts.

ii. Fact Sheets:

A press release should be written so it can be used without any editing. That means all the relevant information must be included. Of course, there may be additional important information that doesn't really fit into the press release. That's where the fact sheet comes in. Fact sheets include more detailed information on the product; its origins, and its particular features. By providing fact sheets, it is easier for the media to write a story about the product because the fact sheet can help to clear up misperceptions and answer reporters' questions, saving them a phone call or e-mail query.

iii. Press Kits:

The press kit pulls together all the press releases, fact sheets, and accompanying photographs about the product into one neat package. A comprehensive folder can serve as an attention-getter and keep the provided materials organized.

iv. Video News Releases:

The video news release (VNR) is the video equivalent of a press release. Prepared for use by television stations, the typical VNR runs about ninety seconds and can be used to highlight some important features of the product.

v. Employee/Member Relation:

An organization's employees are an extremely important internal public. Corporate public relations people often spend a great deal of time developing employee communication programs, including regular newsletters, informational bulletin boards, and internet postings. In service organizations in particular, these kinds of activities can be used to help support brand communication efforts, for example, using the company newsletter to remind employees about the importance of prompt and polite customer service.

vi. Community Relations:

It is critical that companies maintain the role of good community citizen within the markets where they have offices and

manufacturing facilities. Many companies actively encourage their employees to take part in community organizations, and local corporations are often major sponsors of community events and activities such as arts presentations, blood donation drives, and educational activities.

vii. Financial Relations:

Because so many major brand marketing organizations are publicly held companies, financial relations has become a key aspect of public relations activity. Downturns in company earnings quickly lead to declines in stock prices, and, frequently, to top executives losing their jobs. Financial relations people are responsible for establishing and maintaining relationships with the investment community, including industry analysts, stockbrokers, and journalists specializing in financial reporting.

The financial relations specialist has the job of getting maximum press coverage for a company's financial successes and putting the best face possible on any financial losses. Financial relations personnel write the company's annual report as well as any other communications directed to stockholders.

viii. Industry Relations:

The primary public that industry relations specialists deal with is other businesses operating within the same industry, as well as trade associations. The recent travails of the tobacco companies of the U.S. help to underscore the importance of industry relations – while the various companies are not in agreement on all issues, they have banded together in many instances to try to influence policy and legislation, with the thinking that there should be strength in numbers.

ix. Development/Fund-Raising:

This is particularly important area for not-for-profit organizations such as arts organizations, educational institutions, and community service programs. These types of companies often rely on donations from the public, government, and other organizations to make up all or part of their operating budgets. Development specialists identify likely prospects for giving, prepare proposals to present to those prospects, and work to nurture ongoing relationships.

x. Special Events:

Event marketing is rapidly gaining popularity. The International Events Group estimates that more than 5,200 companies spent \$6-8 billion on event sponsorships in 1998. Of that, about 65 percent goes to sporting event sponsorships, followed by 11 percent to entertainment tours (such as concerts and theater performances), and 9 percent to fairs and festivals. Besides linking their brands to existing events, marketers are also creating events of their own designed to reach specialized targets.

The event itself can serve as a compelling news angle for related publicity efforts, can be promoted through advertising, and can serve as a distribution point for sales promotion incentives. With a little creativity, events can serve as an important point of differentiation from competitors.

What is Public Relations – 4 Major Areas: Media Relations, Editorial and Broadcast Material, Controlled Communications and Face-to-Face Events

There are four major areas that can be relevant in achieving good public relations.

These are:

- i. Media relations
- ii. Editorial and broadcast material
- iii. Controlled communications
- iv. Face-to-face events.

i. Media Relations:

Media relations involve taking news to the editors, taking editors to the news, creating relevant news stories and managing the news. Building good relationships with the media is obviously a benefit. The personal contact with editors is covered in the first two tasks above. The other two relate to the need to produce a regular supply of news items as part of the deliberate, planned and sustained publicity effort.

ii. Editorial and Broadcast Material:

Editorial and broadcast material is the 'product' of public relations. It covers press conferences, news releases, personal interviews, feature writing, case histories, press visits and journalist briefings. News releases and press conferences are the most commonly used methods of gaining publicity, but as you can see, there are many other techniques which can be used –

a. Press Conferences:

A press conference is held in order to brief members of the media about a major news event. You might be familiar with these conferences being used by a political figure, or maybe by the police during an enquiry into a serious crime. The technique is equally applicable to PR for a company or product.

Editors and feature writers receive many invitations to such events. They are, therefore, selective about which press conferences they choose to attend. The subject has to be particularly interesting or topical, or maybe the conference/presentation is attractive because it is held in an interesting location.

The cider makers, H P Bulmer, used to own the steam engine, King George V. They used steam-train runs as a location for press conferences, and always found a willing audience.

b. News Releases:

A news release is an item circulated to the media in the hope of getting it placed in a publication. It is the mainstay of publicity and, if published, can be of considerable value. Editorial matter is seen and read by more people than advertising in the same magazine or newspaper. The contents of an article also gain credibility by having the implied support of the publication.

Whereas advertisements are seen for what they are, editorial comment is often considered objective and unbiased. The drawback of relying on publicity is that the editors decide what will be published and when it will appear. If a news release is set out in a way that is unsuitable for the publication, then it might be modified before insertion.

This modification could change the balance and meaning of the release. The release could, of course, be rejected. Rejection is more

likely with a major publication which is inundated with releases. Specialist journals, however, are often pleased to receive items about product successes, new contracts, innovations, export achievements or people in the industry. In some cases the specialist journals could be the best media to reach your target.

News releases are a 'one-way' communication, which do not give an opportunity for questions. Press conferences do give an opportunity for 'two-way' exchanges but only with the media editors, not with the eventual target audience. They are often used to support a news release where it is felt the story could be enhanced by contact.

iii. Controlled Communications:

Controlled communications is the area of publicity material for company use. It includes annual reports, educational material, leaflets, audio-visual presentations, and any material that could be successfully placed to support organisational objectives. This low-cost material is a luxury for some organisations because of the time required to plan and prepare it. The benefits are even more difficult to measure than advertising or other main media publicity. But such channels should not be ignored. The less usual ways of reaching consumers could prove effective just because they offer a different approach.

iv. Face-to-Face Events:

These include other ways of reaching the chosen audience direct. Conferences, exhibitions, lectures, shopping centre events, demonstrations, open days, public visits and many more are examples of activities used to facilitate contact. The environment for such contact is a key ingredient. Then the event has to be structured to give the right level of interest, linked to the communication message, for the event to be considered worthwhile.

Exhibitions are an excellent way to present an organisation to its customers. They can be expensive, but can also be a simple, low-cost 'shell' construction. Whatever the cost, it is important to ensure that an exhibition is as effective as possible.

This means being proactive in inviting visitors to your exhibition stand, rather than reactive, waiting for visitors to appear. The role of PR, as well as direct mail, in attracting visitors must not be ignored.

The cost of such an exercise is only a small proportion of the cost of the exhibition as a whole, and usually is money well spent.

What is Public Relations –

Role: Press Relations, Product Publicity, Corporate Communication, Lobbying and Counseling

The public relations department performs following functions:

(i) Press relations – The public relations department works with the media to present true facts about the company to ensure that information about the company is presented in a positive manner.

(ii) Product publicity – The public relations department sponsors events and programmes to publicise new or existing products. For example, many companies adopt a park, a school, an orphanage or sponsor sports and cultural events like seminars, exhibitions, news conferences etc.

(iii) Corporate communication – The company issues newsletters, annual reports, brochures, audio-visual materials to influence the public and the employees. For example, company's top leaders may give a speech or message or give an interview to media.

(iv) Lobbying – The company has to maintain healthy relations with government officials, ministry in charge of corporate affairs, industry, finance association of commerce and industry etc. The company also has to take the opinion of shareholders while formulating industrial, taxation policies etc. to keep them satisfied.

(v) Counseling – The public relations department also advises the management on issues that affect the image of the company and guide them to involve in various social welfare activities to increase presence in the public domain and gain confidence of society at large.

What is Public Relations – Tools: News, Speech, Printed Materials, Special Events, Audio – Visual Materials, Public Services, Institution Identity and Website

In order to promote sales, many functions are performed by Public Relations Department. Different Public Relations tools are adopted as aids in this process.

These tools are:

1. News:

News is the main tool of public relations. Public Relations Department spreads the news about the products of the company. Consumers are in a better position to form an opinion about the company with the help of the news they listen to or read in any publication.

2. Speech:

Speech is also an important tool to propagate about the product and the company. The vital views concerning the company and its products being expressed by top authorities and the personnel of the company are published in important newspapers.

The copies of their speeches are distributed among people. All these steps are necessary to project a better image of the company.

3. Printed Materials:

Printed materials also form important tools of public relations. Usually, all the eminent companies have their own newsletters, annual reports and regularly published magazines which are distributed on regular basis among the members of the public. Companies make available all the vital information pertaining to the functioning of their business, their turnovers, profits and future plans of development. These publications are usually sent by post or couriered to clients.

4. Special Events:

Public Relations Department makes publicity about the company. If anything relating to company transpires, the same is made public to consumers. For example, if a company is being awarded by the government for its best performance in the field of production or

export-earnings, Public Relations Department takes special pains to publicise this event among people. Such information creates a better image of the company among people and its goodwill gets a big boost.

5. Audio-Visual Materials:

Public relations work is also undertaken through the medium of audio-visual materials. Audio- video cassettes help in this connection. These cassettes are shown to public in cinema-houses or at public places where a larger audience is reached. No doubt, these audio-video cassettes have become an important tool of advertising in modern times.

6. Public Services:

Companies resort to public welfare activities so as to have better public relations. These public welfare activities also boost the image of companies. Some of the examples of such activities are organizing health-camps, free coolie service for aged people, women passengers at railway stations, etc.

7. Institution Identity:

Some companies get their “Logos” printed to have their clear “Identity” among the masses of the country. One immediately identifies a company after seeing “Logo” of the company. This is also an important tool of public relations.

8. Website:

This is the most modern tool of public relations. Companies use their websites to advertise their products. General public can seek all the vital information about the company after looking at the particular website of the company.

***What is Public Relations –
Public Relation in Marketing: Helping Create a
Market, Influencing Non-Consumer Groups,
Influencing the Influential in Crisis and a Few
Others**

As far as the marketing function of any organisation is concerned, PR can help, if not more, at least in six different ways, apart from supplementing and enhancing the impact/of the advertising effort –

1. Helping Create a Market:

Marketing assumes the existence of a market, and the role of marketing invariably is to satisfy the needs and wants of those who constitute the market.

However, sometimes companies face a situation where market is blocked for them and they just can't operate.

For example, in India until 1982, India was a blocked market for colour televisions as the colour transmission didn't exist. For all TV manufacturers, the marketing task was to convince the government to commence transmission in colour. The opportunity was the "Asian Games" and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) was, perhaps, convinced on the need to telecast the prestigious games to the rest of the world in colour.

Here one can see the linkage between political strategy of a country influencing the opening of the markets. It is said that companies therefore, must identify the people with the power to open the gates of the blocked markets and prevail upon them to exercise their power. Such tasks fall under the domain of Public Relations, and not marketing.

It is suggested that the organisations should not only identify the chief gatekeeper, but also determine the right mix of incentives to offer. Under what circumstances will the gatekeepers cooperate? Is legislator X primarily seeking fame, fortune or power? How can the company induce this legislator to cooperate? In some countries, the answer may be with a cash payoff (a hidden P of the marketing Mix).

Elsewhere, a payoff in entertainment, travel or campaign contributions may work.

What is expected is to successfully negotiate and do lobbying in order to successfully achieve the objectives which you have been lobbying for.

Kotler (1986) in his articles of Mega marketing has said that “successful marketing is increasingly becoming a political exercise”. Pepsi Cola outwitted its arch rival, Coca-Cola, by striking a deal to gain entry into India’s huge consumer market, fast heading towards, 1,000 million people. While Coca-Cola withdrew from India in 1978, Pepsi made an entry forming a joint venture with the Indian counterpart, winning governmental approvals, despite opposition from other Indian soft drink companies, and anti-MNC legislations. The package offered included exports of agro-based products, focus on rural markets, newer food processing, packaging and water treatment technology. This package was attractive enough to win over various interest groups.

Taking the example of Pepsi Cola’s entry into the Indian market, Kotler emphasised the need for supplying benefits to parties other than target consumer. “This need extends beyond the requirements to serve and satisfy normal intermediaries like agents, distributors and dealers.” These so-called third parties included governments, labour unions and other interest groups that individually or collectively, can block profitable entry into a “market. These groups act as gatekeepers and they are growing in importance. In dealing with such groups, one has to add two more Ps, i.e., Power and Public Relations.

2. Influencing Non-Consumer Groups:

Invariably, marketing addresses its efforts to the ultimate consumer and overlooks those which might influence the bottom-line. Such groups of people or publics are advertised by the public relations function for overall organisational goals. A typical example is that a medical representative calls on a physician he does not aim to sell medicines, like any typical salesperson involved in marketing and selling.

The medical representative has a purpose of just to keep the physician informed about the new products and formulations the company has introduced in the market though public relations expects the physician to recommend his (medical representative's) medicines to the patients.

Similar is the case with representative of publishing houses who visit teachers in different schools, colleges to inform teachers and not to make them buy their books.

One can identify many such examples where PR programmes are strategically and regularly executed to meet the business objectives from the target audience other than non-consumer groups.

3. Influencing the Influential in Crisis:

How to and how not to communicate during crisis is also a strategic decision. The marketing crisis can range from product failure or tampering during transit or by trade, protests by activists (e.g., KFC in Bangalore), accidents (e.g., fire in a hotel), government pronouncements (BVO in Limca), etc.

Such situations of crisis get complicated and they get further messed up due to inaccurate reporting. The organisations by not submitting clarifications to the media due to the fear of jeopardising the legal stand, might end up with a negative image in crisis. Denials or withholding information may be viewed as a cover up and even look like admission of guilt automatically.

In such situations, it is suggested that legal and marketing objectives should be dealt with separately. In such situations, the thumb rule is to confirm facts rather than giving explanations. It is likely that as a result of this organisations might emerge with a cleaner image.

4. Influencing the Dealers and Sales People:

Most organisations find it difficult to reach their product to the consumers directly, and, instead they use either a sales force to sell their goods door to door or to dealers and on the other hand they have a whole lot of intermediaries who participate in reaching the company's product from manufacturing point to the consumption place. It is the trade which might push the product in the market and give priority to a product over the competitors.

It is, therefore, important to exercise good relations with dealers, wholesalers who contribute significantly in making the bottom line the balance sheet, rosier. Dealer conferences, conventions, display contents, gifts, in-house publications, etc., are all such PR tools to achieve dealers' support and cooperation. Similar is the significance of the sales force.

5. Influencing Direct Consumers through Means Other than Advertising:

In certain industries, it is not possible to use the conventional promotion tools with success. For example, there are other organisations where the size of the operation is not large enough to support a heavy promotional budget. There are others who find it difficult to advertise or promote as it might lead to a bad taste. For example, a hospital might find it very difficult to advertise abortion services. Similar could be the case for open heart surgery or other services.

Arising out of these reasons, the conventional promotional tools have a limited use. Duncan (1985) has suggested that the services sector industries have to think about other promotional tools.

There are very successful examples like a medical doctor specialising in eye care running his own clinic-cum-nursing home and organising free eye camps in his region. This community service not only spreads his name, but also proves his competence. The local newspapers might carry stories about such camps to give further boost to the promotion.

Therefore, promotional activities like community relations, event management, media blitz, corporate identity programmes have a relevance and they should be used innovatively and effectively.

6. Influencing Employees to Serve the Customers Better:

Marketing activities in all organisations can, be clubbed under three major heads, namely – External marketing, Internal Marketing and Interactive Marketing.

The traditional 4Ps of the marketing mix are basically external to an organisation as these efforts are targeted at customers. However, every single individual in organisation plays some role in marketing a product or service and, therefore, any effort by the company by

way of training on product knowledge, product handling, customer knowledge, selling etc., in addition to motivation, can be taken as the internal marketing tool.

Interactive marketing relates to the skill of employees in handling, customer contact. A customer judges the quality not only on the basis of technical quality of the product services package, but also by its functional quality.

Customer's experiences of the moments of truth are based on certain expectations created by the service provider. The traditional marketing efforts give promises, which correspond with the personal need and aspirations of the target group of customers. In addition, employee's abilities and motivation to meet the expectations of customer as created by external marketing efforts are backed up by internal marketing efforts.*

What is Public Relations – Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages:

Public Relation should be an important but subtle part of the promotional mix, not just an adjunct to advertising.

The most important advantages to be gained are:

i. Credibility – If the public are made aware of the benefits to be gained from a company's products from an independent source, and that source is not being paid by the company in question, then the credibility factor is that much greater.

ii. Greater readership – When glancing through a newspaper it is seldom that a great deal of attention is primarily paid to advertisements. Much more attention is given to editorial or news sections. Similarly, people are more likely to divert attention from the television to do other things while the advertisements are being shown.

iii. Contain more information – Public relation is able to impart more information to the public than advertisements can. A glance is all that is usually given to an advertisement, whereas public relation,

when presented as news, is given more attention and is therefore able to contain much more detailed information.

iv. Cost benefits – No direct payments are made to the media for public relation. There are obviously costs involved, but PR budgets are far less than those for advertising.

v. Speed – Public relation has an advantage of speed. Information on a major development can often be issued and reported in a short space of time. Public relation can also be flexible and reactive.

Disadvantages:

Public Relation is generally looked upon as being of benefit, but sometimes both companies, and famous personalities, wish that they could avoid public relation. If there is a major accident on the premises of a company, or an oil leak from one of the oil companies' installations offshore, that company will be on the receiving end of some very bad public relation.

They can try to minimise this by breaking the news to the media themselves, and being as helpful as possible, but damage to their reputation will still be incurred.

i. Message distortion – A company has no control over what the media report about them. A press release, which a company hopes is reported in full, may in fact not be used at all, or may have only a small portion of it reported.

ii. Repetition – With advertisements a company can ensure that there is frequency of the message. Public Relation does not have this advantage and the message may only be given once, if at all.

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