

Public Relations Campaign

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Abstract

Campaigns are usually conducted to achieve specific organizational purposes. Likewise public relations campaigns are established to solve the problems or improve the situations of the organizations. PR practitioners must understand the elements of public relations campaigns that consist of seven basic elements. First elements is situational analysis by researching. Next, establishing objectives to present the campaign outcomes. Then, identifying the target public in order to design the key messages and select appropriate media. After that defining a timetable to arrange campaign activities and allocating the realistic budgets. Finally, evaluating the accomplishment of a campaign in order to develop campaign in the next time. These elements provide campaign procedures so that PR practitioners can create public relations campaigns systematically. Successful campaigns are described in term of five characteristics: educational, engineering, enforcement, reinforcement and evaluation.

Elements of a public relations campaign

Planning for a public relations campaign is essential not only to know the management process but to increase opportunities for achieving campaign. Even though many public relations managers or PR practitioners feel they have limited time to plan a campaign, however planning prevents the loss of time from errors of operating a campaign. Before planning a campaign, PR practitioners must consider all the elements properly and understand the “overall picture” of a campaign clearly.

A public relations campaign consists of seven basic elements which are described in the following paragraphs.

Situational analysis

Situational analysis is the first element of a public relations campaign. This element starts with a stable base of research. Researching is an effective tool of the PR practitioners to understand the situation that leads to the conclusion that a public relations campaign

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is needed. There are many different types of research : primary and secondary, formal and informal, qualitative and quantitative . The PR practitioners can apply appropriate types of research and the methodology in different campaign situations.

The organizations can create public relations campaigns in many situations. According to Wilcox, Ault, Agee and Cameron (2000, p. 145), some organizations create campaigns in order to solve the problems or situations that negatively affect the organization. While some other organizations set up campaigns to preserve reputation and public support which is also a form of reinforcement. The consistency of good relationship with public is important. On many occasions, public relations campaigns are created to conduct a specific one-time project such as, planning campaign for the grand opening of San Antonio's new public library.

Without situational analysis, it is impossible to derive accurate and precise information to determine the strategic campaigns which will be implemented, including the establishment of the time tables. Thus, quality of situational analysis need to be considered in public relations campaigns.

Objectives

The next element of a public relations campaign is to establish objectives that is the statement to present the realistic views which the organizations desired to accomplish. These objectives present outcomes of campaign in-

stead of inputs.

Gregory (2000, p. 84) says that the kind of objectives in public relations campaigns may be presented to :

- promote understanding
- overcome misunderstanding
- create awareness
- inform
- develop knowledge
- displace prejudice
- encourage belief
- confirm a perception

Actually, writing objectives is absolutely vital for public relations campaigns because objectives provide the direction for planning and evaluating campaigns.

Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000, p. 387) suggest that objectives are most useful if PR practitioners follow a pattern :

- Begin with “to” followed by a verb describing the direction to the

- intended outcome for example, “to increase” “to decrease” and “to maintain”. Objectives should be specific, clear and understandable.

- Specify the outcome to be achieved. There are three levels of outcomes : knowledge outcome, attitude outcome and behavioral outcome. Objectives usually present in the “learn – feel – do” causal sequence.

- Statement in each outcome levels to be maintained in clearly measurable terms. Quantitative objectives evaluate much easier.

- Set the date when the outcome will be achieved. Date provides guidance for defining schedule communications and events.

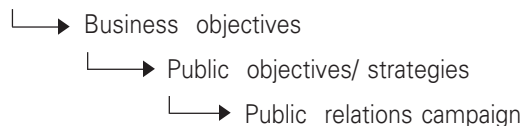
Cutlip, Center, and Broom offer the example of the objectives in public relations campaigns in the following paragraphs.

- Objective. “To increase, within six weeks after starting the program, the percentage of drivers from 8 percent to at least 90 percent who are aware that in a typical year four company delivery drivers are seriously injured and one is killed while driving on the job.”

- Objective. “To increase, within two months after starting the program, the percentage of drivers from 5 percent to at least 80 percent who know that 55 percent of all fatalities and 65 percent of all injuries from vehicle crashes could be prevented if seat belts were used properly.” (Matara & Artigue, 2000, p. 69).

PR practitioners can change the objectives appropriate to different campaigns environment. However, they must be sure that the objectives of a public relations campaign support the business objectives. According to Seitel (2001, p. 178), the broad environment in which the organization operates must dictate overall business objectives. The task of organizing for a public relations campaign should flow naturally.

Environment



Objectives of a public relations campaign support business objectives

Public /Audience

In public relations campaigns, PR practitioners

must determine public or audience clearly.

The organizations have to communicate with different public which is termed as stakeholder such as, employees, customers, shareholders, media, suppliers community groups, financial agencies and government. James Grunig points out that public can be defined in four kinds :

- **Nonpublics** – people who do not face a problem or situation. They have no impact on the organization.

- **Latent publics** – people who face a problem or situation but fail to recognize it.

- **Aware publics** – people who recognize that they involve in a problem or situation but have not communicated about it with other people.

- **Active publics** – people who communicate and manage to do something about the problem or situation.

Additionally, PR practitioners can identify public based on these characteristics:

- **Demographics** – Knowing about gender, age, income, marital, social status, education of target public.

- **Geographics** – Indicating where to find the target public by using zip codes, telephone area codes, city limits, country lines.

- **Psychographics** – Understanding about lifestyle, value, attitude, belief of target public that relate to the achievement of a public relations campaign. (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2000, pp. 383-384).

Defining of the primary and secondary public is essential. The primary public is not the “general public”. For example, the Ohio vaccination campaign for children under the age of two.

The primary public in this campaign is parents with young children. The secondary public is pregnant women and medical professionals who treat young children (Wilcox, Ault, Agee & Cameron 2000, p. 149). PR practitioners should recognize that reaching the nonpublic that has no stake in campaign is a waste of money and time.

After identifying the public, the organizations can select the best media that suit with each public. Identification of the public also provide guidance for selecting appropriate strategies & tactics and messages that is the effective way to reach each public.

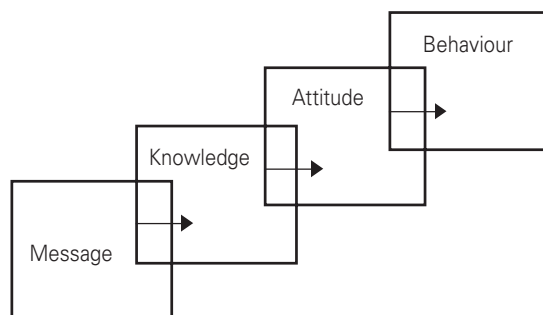
Messages

Messages are important for public relations campaigns because messages are part of the attitude forming process. Moreover messages demonstrate the effectiveness of communication. PR practitioners should create interesting message in order to encourage public to expose messages of public relations campaigns. According to David Ogilvy, guru in advertising industry, suggests that “magic words” such as new, free, save, and win in headlines or slogans can increase the chance of attracting attention (Matara & Artigue, 2000, p.71).

The key messages or themes of campaign need to be clear, concise and readily understood. In addition, PR practitioners must ensure that these messages are credible and deliverable. Wilcox, Ault, Agee and Cameron (2000, p.150) suggest that throughout the campaign, PR practitioners should recognize that the key messages or themes are reiterated in all media whether radio, television, brochure,

banner, poster or direct mail. For example, the Ohio immunization program was based on the concept that parents love their children and want them to be healthy. A key messages was telling about important vaccination that keep children out of danger.

When public obtain these messages, they come to understand and trust them because these messages are consistent in all media. The organizations can improve knowledge attitude and behavior of public through the contents of public relations messages. According to Gregory (2000, p. 82), many PR practitioners want to believe in the Domino Theory of the effect of communication.



The Domino Theory of the effect of communication

This theory is consonant with the AIDA model in marketing theory.

A - Public become **A**ware of an idea or product or service.

I - Public **I**nterest and seek out more information.

D - Public **D**esire to buy the product or service.

A - Public take **A**ction by buying the

product or service.

PR practitioners should recognize that the effectiveness of campaign messages must be designed to suit with situation, media, time, budget and the variety of audience segments.

Timetable

Timetable means a schedule of activities that should be established in a public relations campaign. The public relations tasks are always related to many people and coordination of several departments. Therefore, identifying deadlines enables PR practitioners to manage time to accomplish the tasks that need to be done.

Wilcox, Ault, Agee and Cameron (2000, p. 153-154) point out that there are three aspects of timing that are important to accomplish in public relations campaigns :

- Deciding when a campaign should be conducted. Public relations campaigns should be conducted based on the intended audience or seasonal context. For example, strawberry producers set up public relations campaign in May and June when the stores have large supplies of the fruit.

- Determining the proper sequence of activities. PR practitioners should determine the sequence of various activities. For example, integrated marketing communication program often use public relations campaigns in the first stage to create awareness of a new product. The second stage may use an advertising and direct mail campaigns.

- Compiling a list of steps that must be completed. PR practitioners must compile

a list of tasks and required completion dates so that the tasks in hand can be completed on time. For example, for preparing a video news release, a press kit or a brochure often take weeks and months. For interview, PR practitioners have to invite guests three or four months in advance.

It is necessary that PR practitioners manage their timetable effectively and define the various activities in the right sequence so that public relations campaigns can be operated efficiently.

Budget

After defining the activities that PR practitioners want to conduct in a public relations campaign, the organization must allocate the budgets properly so that PR practitioners can operate these activities completely. According to Seitel (2001, p. 182), without a realistic budgets no organization can succeed. Likewise, public relations activities must be disciplined by budgetary realities.

Ideally there are three steps for managing budgets First, defining resources that are important for implementing a public relations campaign such as human, time, material and equipment . Second, determine the quantities of those resources that will be used. Finally, estimating the costs of the resources.

Information that comes from three steps is very useful for planning the budgets. Therefore PR practitioners should know about this information. (Baskin, Aronoff & Lattimore, 1997, p. 139).

Furthermore, PR practitioners should

consider the advantages and disadvantages of various media in order to prepare the budgets properly. The effectiveness of allocating the budgets does not deal with spending the least amount of money but PR practitioners should consider the media that can access to target audience.

For example, mass media such as television, radio, magazine, newspaper are more costly for a public relations budgets but these media are more efficient in reaching target audience.

Besides, monitoring budgets is significant so that PR practitioners can control the costs to follow the public relations budgets. According to Matara and Artigue (2000, p. 72), whether a budget is several hundred dollars or in the millions, reviewing in each monthly budgets is way to examine before rising costs become a major problem that affects accomplishment of a public relations campaign

Evaluation

The last element of a public relations campaign is evaluation. This is an essential element in campaign. Evaluation is the systematic measurement of a campaign's effectiveness. After implementing the campaign, PR practitioners should evaluate the results and compare with stated objectives of a public relations campaign. Then only PR practitioners can provide information and answer to the clients about the success of the campaign.

According to Professor Frank Wylie, professor at California State University, mentioned about evaluation that "We are learning what

we did right, what we did wrong, how much progress we've made and, most importantly, how we can do it better next time" (Wilcox, Ault, Agee & Cameron 2000, p. 192). However, Watson's research showed that most PR practitioners use evaluation techniques to present information rather than to improve campaign in the next time (Gregory, 2000, p. 140).

Measurement in public relations campaign provides several useful information. Wilcox, Ault, Agee and Cameron (2000, p.193) say that there are three levels of measurement.

On the basic level are compilation of message, distribution and media placements.

The second level is the measurement of audience awareness, comprehension and retention of the messages.

The advanced level deals with the measurement of changes in attitudes, opinions, and behavior.

In practice, evaluating in a public relations campaign can use a combination of evaluation techniques to obtain more complete evaluation. For example, using news clips technique to check the contents and quantity of publications, monitoring radio and television programs by using electronic clipping technique including survey research to answer about audience awareness. Waggener Edstrom company used news clips as one measure of its campaign to publicize the introduction of Microsoft's Windows.

However, PR practitioners must recognize that evaluation criteria should be realistic,

credible, specific and in line with client or employer expectations. Certainly, the systematic evaluation in a public relations campaign make PR practitioners gain reliable information so that campaign can be improved.

Characteristics of successful campaigns

Identification of successful campaigns can be indicated in many characteristics. Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg (2004, pp.302-303) point out that there are five characteristics of successful campaigns which are explained in the following paragraphs:

(1) The first characteristic is educational. The organization should publicize information which the public have not known before including giving different information or procedures in issues that the public have already known.

(2) The second characteristic is engineering. This characteristic has effect to change in human behavior. This is an important objective in most of the campaigns. Engineering deals with the means that are convenient for public to do something that the organization wants them to do. For example, if the organization wants public to throw garbage in the bin, they will provide the bin to serve in the areas that are easily accessible to the public.

(3) The third characteristic of successful campaigns is enforcement. This characteristic encourage public to be aware of the important of the campaign that leads to change of human behavior. Even though many campaigns are successful in educational and engineering level but they failed to change

human behavior. Consequently, it is necessary that the laws are enacted to impose fines for noncompliance. Enforcement by means of law can be presented in the campaigns of wearing motorcycle helmets and seat belts.

(4) Reinforcement is the fourth characteristic in successful campaigns. It means that public perceive in value of the campaign and general public increasingly agree with the campaign. For instance, the “Smokey Bear” campaign which concerns with preventing forest fires is one of the most successful campaign in the United States. It is 50 years old and it still remains so today.

(5) The fifth characteristic is evaluation. At the final stage of public relations campaigns, evaluation is a significant characteristic. It can help the PR practitioners to examine the campaign’s success and accumulate information about the effectiveness of the media as well as describe the changing attitudes and behavior of those whom the organizations are called “public” that is the most important reason to succeed in campaign. Identifying of successful campaign can be presented in five characteristics.

Conclusion

A public relations campaign consists of seven basic elements. Each element is necessary in operating campaign. Starting of public relations campaign is situational analysis by researching that provide useful information for planning campaigns. Then, PR practitioners define public relations objectives that the organization expects to accomplish. Certainly,

public relations objectives must support business objectives. Next, identification of the target public that directly relate to campaign. After identifying the target public, PR practitioner can design messages that are reiterated in all the media to increase recognition of public. Timetable is one of the element that provide guideline to public relations activities in the right sequence. So PR practitioners can allocate realistic budgets to suit with the various activities. Finally ,

evaluation is a systematic measurement of a campaign's effectiveness. If PR practitioners consider all these elements completely, they will understand the dynamic process of communication that is termed as "public relations campaign" that is the most important reason to succeed in campaign. Identifying of successful campaign can be presented in five characteristics - educational, engineering, enforcement, reinforcement and evaluation.

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