

Corporate communication and public relations role

What Are the Functions of a Corporate Communication Department? - by Ann Frederick

Corporate communications departments play a key role in how investors, employees and the general public perceive a company. They often report directly to a company's chief executive officer and serve as advisers in managing a company's reputation. They help leaders prepare for media interviews, develop messages to deliver to investors and employees and suggest new initiatives to keep companies on the cutting edge of communication with their stakeholders.

Media Relations - This may be the function for which corporate communication managers are best known. Media relations work includes writing and distributing news releases and responding to media inquiries. Corporate communicators oversee all planning for news conferences, including selecting the site for an event, arranging for banners and other graphics to be displayed at the event, preparing packets of information to distribute to the media and preparing executives to speak at news conferences. Media relations also involves arranging for spokespersons to appear on local television and radio programs. Corporate communicators monitor newspapers, television news broadcasts and other outlets to see what the media is saying about the company and to devise strategies to address misinformation.

Public Relations - Building relationships with customers and responding to inquiries from the public fall under the public relations function of corporate communications. Duties in this area include producing newsletters, brochures and other printed materials designed for the general public. Corporate communicators also manage a company's website and social media presence, which includes monitoring what customers and clients are saying about the company on social networking websites and responding to inaccurate posts or requests for information. Communication professionals may respond directly to calls and emails from citizens and customers with questions about a company's plans or activities. They arrange for speakers from the company to make presentations to local community groups and may facilitate group tours of a company's operations.

Crisis Communication - When an event occurs that threatens public safety or a company's reputation, corporate communicators function as advisers to CEOs and senior leaders in managing the crisis. Special training in the issues unique to crisis communication helps corporate communicators prepare for events such as chemical spills, violence in the workplace, an accidental death on the job, layoff announcements and allegations of company wrongdoing. They often work with staff throughout their organizations to develop crisis communication plans before disaster strikes. A crisis may require communications staff to work with attorneys, government regulators, political officials, emergency response personnel and communications staff from other companies when developing crisis messages.

Employee Communications - In addition to conveying a company's messages to external audiences, corporate communicators may also be called on to function as employee communications managers, which includes designing printed publications and writing emails to announce company news, benefits information and training opportunities. Corporate communicators may facilitate focus groups to learn what issues matter most to front-line employees. They advise senior leaders on how to improve relationships with their staff and gain support for their initiatives. The corporate communications staff may also manage a company's Intranet and internal blogs.

What Are PR Communication Tools & Techniques? - by Ian Linton

Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics, according to the Public Relations Society of America. Small businesses can use public relations tools and techniques to communicate effectively with customers, suppliers, employees, investors and the community. Public relations techniques help businesses market their products and services and they influence attitudes toward the company.

Media Information - Newspapers, magazines, radio and television are important channels for communicating with customers, investors and the community. If you launch a new product, for example, you can raise awareness and stimulate interest by issuing a press release to newspapers and magazines that reach your target market. When you want to attract investors, send a press release to the business or financial editors of newspapers describing growth opportunities in your market or significant new business wins. If you want to gain public approval for your new factory plans, explain the economic and employment benefits to the community through press releases to local media.

Opinion - Providing the media with opinions or comments on important issues can help raise your company's profile. Invite editors and journalists to interview your chief executive on legislation that affects your industry, for example. Ask your technical director to comment or write an article on an important new technology or material, and offer the content to trade magazines. Speaking engagements at conferences or local business events, such as chambers of commerce meetings, also provide valuable opportunities to demonstrate your company's expertise.

Social Media - Participating in social media gives you the opportunity to monitor attitudes toward your company and fine-tune your public relations strategy in response. Monitor references to your company or products on social media, such as Facebook, Twitter or product review sites, and respond to both positive and negative comments. By engaging in dialogue, you can help to build positive attitudes and manage your company's reputation.

Employee Communications - Employee communications are important, even in small businesses. Keeping employees informed about new products, customer wins, important appointments or new business opportunities builds positive attitudes and commitment. You can use newsletters or an employee page on your website to publish relevant company news. Sending press releases on business developments to local newspapers can also help you attract new employees if you are expanding your business.

Social Responsibility - Volunteering for community projects or providing sponsorship for local sports or community events strengthens relationships with the public and demonstrates your company's social responsibility. If your products or manufacturing processes have an environmental impact, publish your company's policies through press releases or public meetings to establish your green credentials.

Roles of Public Relations in an Organization - by Beth Winston

Almost all large organizations either have a public relations department or outsource their public relations needs to a company. Public relations is seen as a vital part of maintaining the organization's image and of communicating its message to its customers, investors and the general public. A positive perception of a company or non-profit can increase its sales and improve its bottom line. The functions and key tasks of a public relations specialist can be varied.

Public Image Strategy - Public relations strategists will work with top executives in the or-

ganization to craft an overview of how the company wants to be perceived, and how it is going to project a positive image. This can involve focusing in on exactly the right message, and then deciding on the broad outlines of a campaign to disseminate that message.

Outreach Events - Public relations professionals often arrange events to raise the profile of the organization or lend its brand and name to a charitable event that represents the philosophy of the company. Think of a corporation sponsoring a Special Olympics event, or a hospital organizing a health outreach day in its town.

Media Relations - Talking with the media is a core function of public relations departments. Public relations professionals field questions from reporters, arrange for interviews with key individuals in the organization and write press releases to make the media aware of company events or achievements.

Social Media - One emerging function of public relations is to maximize an organization's positive use of social media to build its image. Managing a Twitter feed, a Facebook page and a YouTube channel are all vital ways to connect with possible new customers or stakeholders. Monitoring public comment about the organization on the Internet can also give PR professionals early warning of any emerging trends or problems.

Handling Emergencies - Sometimes a company or organization is struck by a disastrous event that ruins its public image. This might be an oil company that has to deal with a high profile spill, or a food company that has a contamination event. Public relations professionals decide how the organization will repair the damage to its image, communicate how it is dealing with the problem and regain control of its message.

Importance of Public Relations for Organizational Effectiveness - by Lisa McQuerrey

Regardless of how effective an organization is, it doesn't have the desired impact if the public and consumers are not aware of the business's brand, successes or contributions. A public relations campaign that educates and informs people about the contributions of the organization enhances its brand recognition and makes it more relevant in the public eye.

Products and Services - A good public relations campaign highlights a small business's products and services through creative means. For example, a publicity campaign that highlights a new product launch also promotes the business as a whole. A press conference held to discuss an expansion has the added benefit of introducing key decision-makers to the general public and putting a public face with the company name. These types of outreach efforts can help improve the overall impression of an organization.

Innovation - A public relations initiative that touts a small business's innovations can attract attention, investors and potential business partners. Regular forms of communication in the form of feature news articles, public appearances and presentations, and service on expert industry panels establish a small business's place in their industry's spotlight. This positive perception can help improve overall effectiveness by demonstrating the company's ongoing successes.

Charitable Work - When the general public is aware of a small business's charitable contributions and community support, it can make it more interested in patronizing the business. For example, a public relations outreach effort that notifies the community about a small business's cash donation to a local school paints the business as a good corporate citizen. This can help elevate an image of trust and respect, which can translate to a better overall perception of a company.

Economic Impact - Regularly touting a company's earnings, job creation and overall economic impact can help establish it as an important part of a city's economic engine. For example, releasing quarterly employment figures or contributing to economic development re-

ports is an effective way to show the benefit the company brings to the community. This can raise awareness of the importance of the organization and better position it for expansion funding and business-to-business opportunities, and even make it be seen as a viable employer.

Internal Perceptions - Internal public relations campaigns have the potential to bolster staff morale, improve communications and motivate employees. Public relations efforts that keep all employees in the loop about company activities and strategic plans and invite feedback can get significant buy-in from employees. This can make them more supportive of the company's efforts and more effective performing their jobs.

Role of a Public Relations Manager in an Organization - by Ron Sardisco

Public relations is the lifeblood of any company. Whether a company is public or private, profit or nonprofit, its reputation will determine its ultimate success. Instant worldwide communications make it more important than ever to manage a company's image and control how a company interfaces with its customers. Public relations failures can seriously undermine the effectiveness of management and compromise company credibility. To keep things running smoothly, the public relations manager must wear many different hats: that of a journalist, marketer and sociologist.

Advocate - The public relations manager is the chief advocate for the company. He must focus all energy on building an organization that will be deemed a good corporate citizen. He is the mouthpiece for management -- and in political circles known as the press secretary.

Communicator - The public relations manager crafts communications policies and oversees the development of all statements and news releases for the company. Sociology, psychology and good journalism are requisite talents for the manager and staff. Communications must be clear, concise and relevant to the audience.

Problem Solver - The public relations manager is the ultimate spin doctor. It is her job to put the best face on news and information that could embarrass or malign the company's reputation. Often, she will be called upon to polish mundane information into platinum data that gives the company more credit than would ordinarily be due for routine accomplishments.

Opinion Maestro - The public relations manager directs all outreach efforts. He is responsible for media placements and coordinating organizational functions and the efforts of executives. It is his responsibility to determine the executive appropriate for each situation and ensure that person has approved information and statements in hand.

10 Principles of Public Relations - by George N. Root III

Public relations is how a company interacts with the public, maintains ties to its community and gets important company information out to consumers and other interested parties. A small business needs to be adept in the practice of public relations and avoid looking to public relations practices only as means to react to a scandal. Practicing public relations means following basic principles that develop a positive reputation for your company in the marketplace.

Deceit - Never deceive the public with any information you release. A lie will be uncovered and the resulting fallout from deceit can be worse than the issue you were trying to cover up. Present the facts in a way that sheds as much positive light on your company as possible.

Contact Information - Every piece of public relations material that comes from your company should have contact information that includes a contact name, phone number, email ad-

dress and mailing address. Give the public a chance to follow up on the information you released and the media a chance to present further information if they find the story interesting.

Target Information - Using a press release distribution service can cost money and make the process of getting information out to the public an expensive proposition. Prior to releasing information, target the audiences that you feel would have the greatest interest in your press release or marketing data.

Photographs - A well-written press release can help the public understand the point you are trying to make. Including a pertinent picture with your press release can give the public a visual image that will either add emphasis to your message, or clarify any potential confusion that your message may cause.

Media Relations - A public relations professional's best allies are journalists. Good media relations will not only get your press releases printed in spots where the public will see them, they can also result in personal interviews that will gain your company even more exposure.

Tools - Understand all of the public relations tools at your disposal and know how to use them. Press releases, speeches, personal interviews, seminars, web broadcasts and direct mail pieces are just some of the tools a public relations professional can use to reach the target audience.

Timing - Some public relations pieces can be scheduled for release well in advance. For example, the announcement of a new product is something a public relations professional can coordinate with the marketing group to get the timing right. But a public relations group should also be prepared to release important information on a moment's notice to coincide with a scandal or corporate emergency.

Availability - Reporters cannot confirm information in time to make print deadlines if you are not available at all times. Availability is critical for a public relations professional, and that means giving all of your contact information to the media and remaining on call at all times.

Stay Active - Your company should not wait for moments to present public relations materials. You should remain active in finding new ways to get information to the consumer or media. Make yourself available for speeches and seminars, and become an active member in professional and civic organizations.

Fact Checking - Never release information until it has been thoroughly checked for accuracy. Develop a fact-checking system for press releases and all public relations materials that will get the information to all pertinent parties to sign off on before it is made public.

Effective Communication Skills Used in Public Relations & Marketing - by Eryn Travis

Effective communication skills are critical for those seeking success in public relations or marketing. However, effective public relations and marketing professionals are rarely experts in all areas of communication, so those new to the field should not be overwhelmed by the variety of different skills needed. Wise public relations and marketing professionals specialize in one or two skills but continue to seek out education, training and experience to improve those areas where they are less confident.

Writing - Despite increases in new technologies, solid writing skills remain critical for public relations and marketing success. Effective public relations and marketing writing is clear, concise, compelling and error-free. In addition, public relations writers should master the inverted pyramid style of writing, a journalistic approach that puts main points first, followed by supporting detail.

Public Speaking - Public-speaking skills are a must since public relations and marketing professionals often find themselves in front of clients, reporters, customers, community representatives or other groups. Effective public-speaking skills are a mixture of audience analysis,

speech writing and speech delivery. Public relations and marketing professionals understand and respond to the needs of their audiences. Compelling speeches start with an attention-getting statement and include a clear thesis, preview of main points, main points, summary and clincher. Delivery skills include eye contact, a varied pitch and smooth vocal rate, and very few vocal fillers, such as "ah" or "like."

Non-Verbal Communication - Successful public relations and marketing professionals draw upon nonverbal communication techniques to underscore and emphasize a verbal or written message or determine the best ways to respond to client, management or team needs. Nonverbal techniques include eye contact, posture, gestures and listening.

Leadership - Since many communication and marketing goals require a team of writers, designers, editors and technicians, public relations and marketing professionals also require leadership skills to effectively pull a campaign together. Savvy marketing and public relations professionals understand the basics, as well as the pros and cons, of leadership theories such as transformational, transactional or situational and know how to choose the best approach based on the needs of their team. They also use communication to inspire as well as hold team members accountable for tasks assigned.

Research - Communications research is the backbone of effective public relations and marketing campaigns. Effective public relations and marketing professionals understand how to align a research method, such as survey, focus group or interview, with the research question. Public relations and marketing professionals also draw from writing, public speaking and nonverbal communication skills to create survey questions, manage focus groups and conduct interviews.