**PUBLIC RELATIONS AND RESEARCH**

Public relations strategy can be more effective and successful if it is backed up by research for collecting and remaining abreast with happenings and events pertaining to either the relevant subject or generalized facts required and usable in appropriate situations. This is what we will cover in this lecture besides identifying methods to conduct research and various desired objectives, advantages and procedures to evaluate the benefits and results of such research.

**PR & Research**

What is research is an important question required to be answered**.** Two eminent management and public relations experts defined and explained research as under:

“Research is the one important source of Ideas for public relations practice.”

**--- Edward J. Robinson**

Management Training & development Authority.

“We can’t manage what we don’t measure.”

**David R. Drobis**

Chairman, CEO, Ketchum Public Relations Worldwide.

“No Public Relations strategy can succeed without background and knowledge of a Situation.”

**--- M. Tariq Bucha**

President Pakistan Public Relations Society.

**2 Methods.**

Following are two main universally accepted methods of conducting research.

* **Primary**

Collecting raw data that has not been compiled before.

* **Secondary**

Reading or consulting available material that someone else has compiled before.

**What Questions Need Answers.**

While conducting research there are certain important questions which need to addressed and answered.

* **Who are our publics?**
* **What is our action / message?**
* **What channels of communication reach our publics?**
* **What should we do to keep in touch?**
* **How will this activity be understood by our publics?**
* **What will our publics say or do as a result of our efforts?**
* **What is their feeling about us?**

**What Does Research Do?**

One important question is regarding the objects achieved by research. Following are few important support factors resulting from research.

* **It supports audience.**
* **It supports media & trend analysis.**
* **It does message testing**
* **It does issue monitoring, forecasting & evaluating.**
* **It often provides essential data for effectively presenting information**.

**Research Sources.**

Following are two important and significant sources of research**.**

* **Scholarly**

Academic institutions and faculty do scholarly research, sometimes with funding from the government, foundations or from professional associations.

* **Commercial**

This is done by research firms, advertising and Public relations firms / agencies & other marketing related companies.

**How To Use Research?**

It is imperative and pertinent to determine what the possible ways to use research with advantage are. **Basically 6 ways.**

* **To formulate strategy.**
* **To gauge success.**
* **To test messages.**
* **To size up competition.**
* **To get publicity.**
* **To sway opinion.**

**Planning Phase Of Research** In order to get positive results from research it is essential to plan it properly as below:

* Issue forecasting.
* Learning about publics.
* Prioritize publics by Issues.
* Interpreting behavior of publics.
* Planning media use.
* Considering Possible Outcomes.

**Using Research For Final Evaluation.**

For final evaluation research can provide major help and support.

•Complete the goal results,& interpret their significance to the specific objectives set ,to the organization’s overall objectives & mission.

•Evaluate the impact of actions taken on your publics to see what their attitudes are now.

•Determine how the organization’s overall objective and mission have been affected**. Measure The Program’s Impact In 3 Areas:**

•**Financial Responsibility** -- going beyond market share to public’s perception of how an organization gets & spends its money.

•**Ethics** --- the perception by publics of an organization’s standards of behavior, a moral judgment of the consequences of what it says and does.

•**Social Responsibility** - public’s perception of whether an organization is a good citizen, e.g. whether it contributes to social, political & economic health of global society.

**PR AND RESEARCH**

As explained in the previous lecture research has a very important place in drafting or compiling a Public relations plan. It is only through research that PR professionals will be able to conceive and devise a practical and result oriented strategy or a plan. In this lecture deeper study into role of research in public relations plan and strategy will be studied and explained.

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| --- |
| **PR & RESEARCH** |
| **Social & cultural change**  **I**  **M**  **P**  **A**  **C**  **T**  **I**  **M**  **P**  **L**  **E**  **M**  **E**  **N**  **T**  **A**  **T**  **I**  **O**  **N**  **P**  **RE**  **P**  **A**  **R**  **A**  **T**  **I**  **O**  **N**  **No. who repeat behaviour**  **No. who behave as desired No. who change opinions**  **No. who learn message content**  **No. who attend to message & activities**  **No. of messages placed & implemented**  **Messages sent to media & activities designed**  **Quality of messages & activity presentation**  **Appropriateness of message & activity content**  **Adequacy of information for designing program** |

**Basically 2 Classifications**

Basically there are two main and practical accepted methods of research.

1. **Formal**

2 types -- qualitative & quantitative, can be conducted in a laboratory or in the field.

1. **Informal**

This is conducted without generally agreed upon rules & procedures and results of which can be used for description & not for prediction.

**Formal**

* State the problem.
* Select a manageable (& measurable) portion of the problem.
* Establish definitions to be used in the measurement.
* Conduct a search in published literature for studies similar in subject or research approach.
* Develop a hypothesis.
* Design experiments.
* Obtain the data.
* Analyze the data.
* Interpret the data to make inferences and generalizations.

• Communicate the results. **Informal**

* **Unobtrusive Measures.**

These are used to gather information, permits researchers to study someone or something without interfering with or interrupting what is going on.

* **Journalistic Research.**

Journalists are also trained to gather Information from the primary (mainly interviews) & secondary sources (public records, media files, libraries.)

* **Opinion & Communication Audits.**

Audits could be:

Social, Economic or Political.

* Generally, researchers concentrate on observational data.
* Communication pundits attempt to evaluate various publics responses to an organization’s communication efforts.
* **Publicity Analysis.**

Clippings from print media and transcripts from broadcast publicity can also be used to determine the quantity & quality of coverage.

**Questionnaires For Survey**

**How To Prepare A Questionnaire?**

* Are the words understandable?
* Do they contain abbreviations, jargons or unconventional phrases?
* Are questions technically correct?
* Are they too vague?
* Are they biased?
* Are questions offensive?
* Do they require too much effort to answer?

**PROBLEMS SOLVING STRATEGIES**

As a public relations professional you must be able to comprehend as to what different phases can do to solve various problems encountered by them. Moreover, students will also be apprised about the working of management of public relations.

**How Does The Management Of PR Work?**

Basically there are two major and important ways to do this.

* PR department’s role as part of the management team to develop problem solving strategies for

entire organization.

* Relates to PR department’s own efforts to integrate & coordinate its work with that of the

organization.

**PROBLEMS SOLVING STRATEGIES**

**BASIC FORMULA**

**OLDER FORMULA**

**R Research**

**R Research**

**A Action**

**O Objectives**

**C Communication**

**P Programming**

**E Evaluation**

**E Evaluation**

**--**

***John***

***Marston***

***--***

***Jerry Hendrix***

**Problems Solving Strategies**

In order to evolve problem solving strategies we have to determine a procedure to handle them but the main question is Where do you start?

* Assemble readily available facts.
* Determine which publics are affected or involved.
* Decide if additional research is needed to define problems & evaluate its scope.

**Where do you go from here?**

* Formulate a hypothesis, assemble facts to test the hypothesis & revise if hypothesis is disproved.
* Elements to consider in this planning:
  1. **What is objective of PR effort – What specifically do you want to accomplish? (be able to state this in concrete terms).**
  2. **What image of company you want to project?**
  3. **What publics are targets & why?**

**Who Are Other Audiences Whose Opinions Matter?**

* What message do you have for each public?
* What media can you use to carry these messages?
* What response do you want from each audience?
* What budget can you use for this – regular allocated budget or a special fund?
* What is the best timing for action?
* Review problems or obstacles that might arise & make contingency plans for these.
* Build in monitoring devices to know; **how are you doing?**

**Once It Is All Over—**

It is important to find out how to know what happened!

* **Plan for evaluation.**
* **Evaluate all aspects :** 
  1. **Impact** : Informational, attitudinal & behavioral.
  2. **Output** : Media efforts & results.
* **Communicate results**.

**In Brief!**

* Find the central core of difficulty.
* Check your total list of publics involved in the problem.
* Determine the problem’s status in terms of potential harm to the organization.
* List the related difficulties to be considered.
* Explore the alternatives.
* List the desired objectives.
* See how the solution fits into the long range plans which are shaped to what you see as the Mission.
* What are the immediate plans & how do these fit with long range plans?
* Short term solutions that do not fit with long range objectives & are not consonant with “mission statement” are wrong. Don’t do them - Start over

**Procedure For Handling Problem Internally.**

* Detail the plan & submit to the policy executive for approval.
* Get approval in writing.
* Keep all people directly involved informed on continuing basis throughout the move toward

solving the public relations problem.

**Intervening Situations. Some Barriers.**

But all said and done despite all best intentions and efforts there can still be certain situations like the ones mentioned below which could prove a hindrance

• **Information you don’t know.**

* **Effects of the way you look at the problem.**
* **Limitations faced by you. (restrictions on the choices the situation offers)**
* **Your personal limitations. (or management’s)**

**Problems associated with upsetting the equilibrium of organization or of others.**