PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGEMENT

Lecture Notes and Study Materials

UNIT -2

Public Relations Process, PR Problems, Elements Of Public Relations, The psychological factors that affect the perception of the public, decision making process

Elements in Public Relations

Briefly, Public Relations involves four major elements. They are inter-related and overlapping. In fact, one tends to lead to another. These are :

a) Two-way Communication;

b) Mutual Understanding;

c) Caring for Public Opinion:

d) Social Responsibility.

;I) Two-way Communication

Public Relations philosophy puts grcat emphasis on the need for two-way comnlunication. It is now fairly well accepted that feedback is importaqt. How does one set it?

Problems in PR

Public relations problems are peculiar to the country or organization where it is operating. Without doubt, the discipline has its global problems. We shall enumerate these problems as it affects the world and Nigeria respectively. It is not exaggeration that public relations is faced with numerous problems or challenges, the truth is that, these problems have constituted to the major challenges the profession is facing today.

More so, the dynamism of the world has posed another challenge to the profession, since our job is communication oriented, we are faced with divers' media to communicate our messages to identified audience. Some schools of thought have enumerated their passive opinions as regarding their thoughts on what public relations' problems are globally. These are:

Financial Constraint

There is no doubt that organizations are cutting budgets, thereby leading to poor financing of the public relations department. Financial belt-tightening has stemmed the flow of public relations' budgets. Companies are reluctant to spend the little revenue they have on improving their media profile. Ironically, now is the time for them to raise their profile and gain new custom.

Increase in Communication Platform

Communication platforms offer a swift, easy way of disseminating messages across to target audience; but the huddles to choose the right communication channels for clients could be painstaking. Though many social media are free to use, even if it need paying subscription for some services, it is still convenient to use. However, a lot of time-investment need to be made in order to reach out to the right audience, passing your messages across to them and getting desired results.

Client's Expectation Management

It is a problem that clients expect you to perform magic in-order to produce their imagined expectations. They expect you to work within any giving budget. They have unrealistic expectations of media coverage and how far their budget will stretch. Saddled with these challenges, a practitioner would need to reduce the scope of his campaign to at least achieve an optimum result.

Poor Man-Power Situation

It is a known fact that most practitioners of public relations have background disciplines in other field of studies. Some are practicing journalists, marketers, advertisers, graphic artists, psychologists and so on; the truth is, they lack comprehensive understanding of what it takes to be a full practitioners in Public relations. Those disciplines are relevant to gaining an expertise in public relations, but they need to be merged with core public relations courses to achieve the birthing of a fully fledged public relations expertise. Some quacks position themselves as practitioners, thereby putting the profession at disrepute; they make claims they cannot defend, and organize campaigns that are substandard and guarded with professional misconduct.

Poor Appreciation of the Profession Among Public and Private Organizations' Leaders

Most organization's leaders have no regard for the profession. They believe anyone could do the job of public relations if put through. They have myopic perception of the profession so they do not see need for engaging both an In-house public relations and consultant to manage their reputation. If they eventually do, they could just employ them as errand officers (Protocols), this is a bastardization of the profession.

Low Awareness of Public Relations and What it Stands For

Public relations is still an evolving phenomenon in most developing countries of the world. This has caused a set back to the proliferation of the discipline in the world. Public relations is just a topic in mass communication or marketing in higher institutions lieu of a discipline. Until practitioners rise to the wake-up call, the discipline may die a natural death in these countries.

Poor Usage of Social Media

Social media has formed the basis for public relations per-excellence in this digital age. Any practitioner that is deficient in the usage of this may fade-out of the profession soon. Social media such as Face book, Linked-in, Tweeter, Net log, etc. are pre-eminent in this present age of our practice. However, most users of social networks abuse them a lot; while some are not diplomatic in the way they use them to convey messages to the public. Other practitioners promote themselves and products without prior interactions with their targets. This attitude could make them (public) perceive you as self centered person who care only about oneself, thereby confirming the saying **"No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you cares."**

Process of PR

Public relations is the management of a two-way communication process. The word 'management' clearly indicates that public relations is not an 'ad-hoc' activity. It is a process of decision making, formulating strategic plans, controlling and coordinating activities to achieve organizational goals.

The four stage public relations process is also called **RPCE MODEL** as detailed below:

1. **'R' for Research or Fact finding:** In this process the role of public relation officer is that of an 'analyst'. In this stage the external and internal environment of an organization is analyzed to elicit public opinion, public reactions, public attitudes towards policies and actions of an organization. This stage answers: what is happening? And what is the problem confronting the organization?

2. **'P' for Planning:** Here the PR practitioner assumes the role of an 'advisor'. Based on the environmental analysis and identified problems, necessary action plans, programmes have to be designed and planned for solution to the issues. He should tell the management what should be done and how can it be done.

3. **'C' for Communication (implementation):** PR practitioner in this process is that of an 'advocate'. How should the action plan be implemented? All the programmes, services formulated have to be grounded with appropriate messages to reach the target audience. Communication and action plans have to move hand-in-hand for better impact. This stage answers: What is the communication strategy? What should be the media mix?

4. **'E' for Evaluation:** PR practitioner in this process is that of an 'antenna'. The last but very important step in PR practice is 'evaluation' or measurement of results of the programme is implemented. Without, evaluation process the entire PR will be a futile exercise. We do not know the results. Therefore the evaluation answers: How did we do? What is the impact of public relations programmes?

5. **The Public Relations Process**

Public relations works best when it is a strategic management function. Strategic public relations is focused on achieving goals and objectives that contribute to the overall purpose and mission of an organization. To be strategic, public relations practitioners need accurate information about the situations they face, the audiences they communicate with, effectiveness of their communication efforts, and the overall impact the program has on building and maintaining relationships with critical stakeholders, without whom the organization could not fulfill its purpose. Public relations practitioners may be tempted to start with tactics—such as press releases, a blog, an event, and so on—but these first should be determined by research, to help inform the overall goals and strategies of the function, otherwise they may be wasted efforts.

9.1 Constructing the Strategic Plan for a Public Relations Campaign

This process is primarily composed of four steps:

1. using research to define the problem or situation, developing objectives and strategies that address the situation, implementing the strategies, and then measuring the results of the public relations efforts. Sometimes acronyms, such as John Marston's RACE (research, action planning, communication, evaluation) or Jerry Hendrix's ROPE (research, objectives, programming, evaluation) are used to describe the process.Marston (1979). You'll notice that that the process always starts with research and ends with evaluation.

Although it is easier to remember such acronyms, the four steps are essentially the following:

1. Use research to analyze the situation facing the organization and to accurately define the problem or opportunity in such a way that the public relations efforts can successfully address the cause of the issue and not just its symptoms.
2. Develop a strategic action plan that addresses the issue that was analyzed in the first step. This includes having an overall goal, measurable objectives, clearly identified publics, targeted strategies, and effective tactics.
3. Execute the plan with communication tools and tasks that contribute to r5eaching the objectives.
4. Measure whether you were successful in meeting the goals using evaluation tools.

Step 1: Formative Research to Analyze the Situation

The first step in the process is analyzing the problem or opportunity. This involves research, either formal or informal, to gather information that best describes what is going on. Research used to understand the situation and help formulate strategies is called **formative** research.

For example, a natural gas company may be considering the route for a new pipeline. It must conduct research to understand what possible obstacles it might face. Are there any environmentally protected or sensitive regions in the area? Are there strongly organized neighborhood groups that might oppose the project? What is the overall public support for natural gas and transportation pipelines? Community relations professionals are very familiar with the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) sentiment. Additionally, are there acceptable alternatives to the pipeline construction? Alternative routes? Alternative drilling procedures? Alternative construction times? All of these questions should be considered before the first shovel breaks ground.

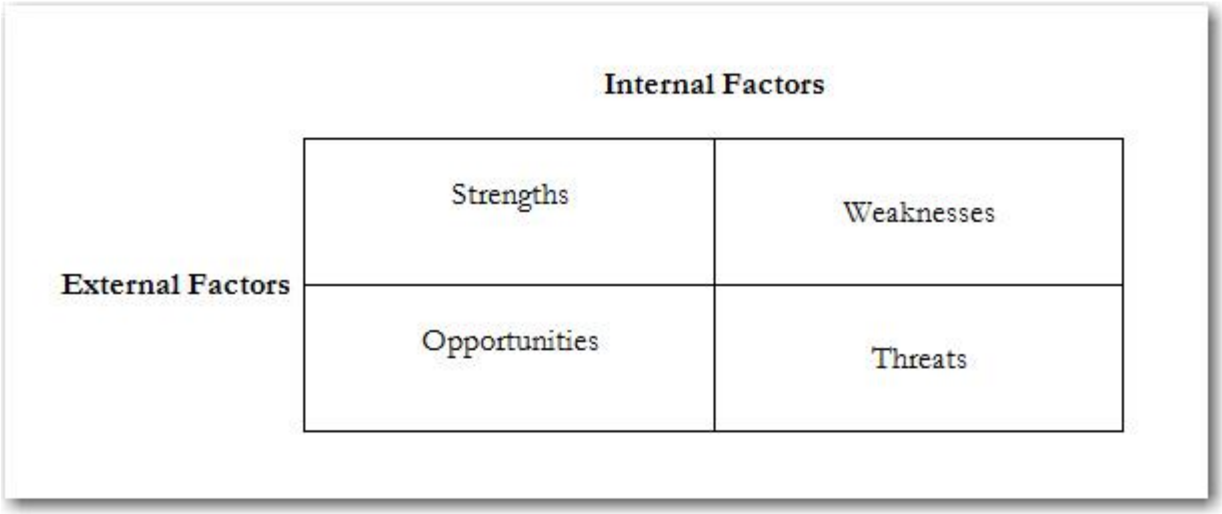
According to Cutlip, Center, and Broom, research "is the systematic gathering of information to describe and understand situations and check out assumptions about publics and public relations consequences."Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2006). Much of this information may already exist and may have been collected by other agencies. Research that has previously been conducted is called **secondary research**. For example, the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America has conducted surveys on public opinion and communication practices of pipeline companies. Research on NIMBY and other social behaviors is also available through a review of academic and professional literature. Secondary sources are the least expensive way to gain background knowledge.

However, you may need to conduct primary research or data you collect yourself for your purposes. You may need to conduct interviews or focus groups with neighborhood associations or environmental groups. You might consider surveys with homeowners and business that might be located near the pipeline (see Chapter 8 "Public Relations Research: The Key to Strategy"). There are many different methods to collect the data that is needed to fully understand the situation. Analysis of previous news stories about pipelines in this region would give you a good idea about the way this story might be framed by media. Another analysis of blogs and other social media about pipelines also would be a good idea. Again the purpose for gathering the information is to help with understanding the situation.

Using a SWOT Analysis

A very popular tool for analyzing situations is the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis. This breaks down a situation by looking at the internal and external factors that might be contributing to the situation before developing strategies. The internal factors are the **Strengths** and **Weaknesses** of the organization. The external factors are the **Opportunities** and **Threats** existing in the organization's environment (see Figure 9.1 "SWOT Analysis").

Figure 9.1 SWOT Analysis



The first step is to look internally at the strengths and weakness of the organization. For example, the energy company may find that it has very strong relationships with members of the media, has good employee morale, is financially sound, and has a culture that values innovation. It may also find that it has weak relationships with environmental groups and neighborhood associations, has a culture that promotes confidence in its decisions (perhaps even bordering on arrogance), and has dedicated few resources in the past toward community relations. This information helps inform the possible strategies it needs to take regarding the construction of a new pipeline.

The external factors, opportunities and threats, are usually the reasons the organization finds itself in the situation. In the case of the energy company, it sees an opportunity to drill into a new methane gas deposit and provide that energy to its clients. To the energy company, this appears to be a win-win situation because it can continue to provide energy to meet the demand of its consumers. However, it also needs to assess the possible threats, which include probable legal actions from opposition groups that could lead to court injunctions. Other threats might include negative coverage of the project by the media, leading to a damaged reputation and lower public support for the project.

After conducting the SWOT analysis, you can couple the internal factors with the external factors to suggest possible strategies.

- SO strategies focus on using organizational strengths to c apitalize on the external opportunities.
- ST strategies also use organizational strengths to counter external threats.
- WO strategies address and improve organizational weaknesses to be better prepared to take advantage of external opportunities.
- WT strategies attempt to correct organizational weaknesses to defend against external threats.

Constructing a Situation Analysis

Once enough data and information has been collected so that you really do understand the core contributing factors and not just the surface conditions, then it is time to write a two-paragraph statement that summarizes the situation. The first paragraph should redefine the situation using the data collected by your research. Highlight the insights gained through formal and informal research. The second paragraph should identify the problems, difficulties, and potential barriers to resolving the issue. These also should have been identified in the research, and the research also should help you recommend solutions to these barriers. For example, the energy company would address the opportunity to provide a new energy source to its customers using innovation and technology for efficient and effective delivery of the natural gas, asking its employees to be ambassadors to the community, and working with the media to tell the positive story of the project. It would also need to identify that previous pipeline projects have been delayed, and in some cases halted, because of the effective opposition of environmental groups and neighborhood associations, and that it needs to improve its efforts with community relations before starting the project.

From the description paragraphs, a succinct one-sentence problem/opportunity statement is written that cuts to the core of the situation and identifies the consequences of not dealing with the problem or opportunity. For example, for the hypothetical utility pipeline situation, because environmental and neighborhood groups have been influential in stopping pipeline projects in the past and this pipeline route is planned to go through sensitive regions, the company needs to build better relationships with the community through communication and action that will eliminate or reduce obstacles to building the pipeline.

Step 2: Strategic Action Planning

The strategic plan should be focused on resolving or capitalizing on the situation identified in the problem/opportunity statement. It begins by flipping the problem/opportunity statement into a **goal**. In the case of the energy company, the goal might be the following: "To use communication and actions that improve relationships with key members of the community in order to successfully complete a pipeline that delivers newly found methane gas to customers." Notice that there is room for change with the pipeline plans in this goal statement. The end goal is to build a pipeline, and in order to achieve this the company may need to make adjustments to the routes or construction of the pipeline. Care should be taken not to write goals that suggest that the public will do something you want them to do. Because publics cannot actually be controlled, it might set up the organization for failure. Instead, focus should be on what can be done to achieve the goal, such as communicate and act in such a way that earns the consent or endorsement of these publics.

The goal provides the direction for the strategic plan and **objectives** provide the direction of specific and measurable outcomes necessary to meet the goal. A good objective meets the following criteria: it should be an end and not a means to the end; it should be measurable; it should have a time frame; and it should identify the public for the intended outcome.Anderson and Hadley (1999).

- **End and not means to an end.** An objective should be an outcome that contributes to the goal. There are three possible outcomes for these objectives: cognitive (awareness, understanding, remembering), attitudinal (create attitudes, reinforce positive attitudes, change negative attitudes), and behavior (create behaviors, reinforce positive behaviors, change negative behaviors). The opposite of these outcome objectives are what Lindenmann called "Output Objectives,"Lindenmann (2003). which are the means to an end. They include the communication efforts to reach the objectives such as placement of messages in influential media. These are actually strategies and not objectives (more on this later).

- **Measureable.** Objectives also help hold public relations professionals accountable for their efforts. Public relations should engage only in strategies +and tactics that actually contribute to larger organizational goals. Measurable objectives often require a comparative number, such as 65% awareness of a product or program. An objective cannot be set to increase awareness by 20% if the current level of awareness is unknown. This is why formative research is needed to establish benchmarks. If no such benchmark exists, then it is customary to establish a desired level, such as "increase awareness to 85%." The problem with this is that you do not know how close you are to that figure before the campaign. This might be an easy objective to achieve (if your level of awareness is already at or above 85%) or a very difficult one (if your awareness level is around 20%).
- **Time frame.** When will the objective be met? If there is no time frame specified, then it cannot be accountable.
- **Identify the public.** It is a good idea to identify overall objectives before tying them to a public. This helps to think about which publics are connected to the objective. However, to make an objective truly measurable it must identify a public, because different publics will be at different levels of awareness, attitudes, and behaviors. For example, the objective may be to increase attendance at employee benefits meetings. Research may find that the messages are getting clogged at middle management, which has many people who have a negative attitude about the meetings and are not encouraging employees. One objective might focus o n increasing the level of awareness of employees while creating another objective focused on increasing positive attitudes of middle management. Of course, this also means that you should look into your meetings and find out how to improve them.

The objectives should advance overall business goals such as increase sales, increase share values, retain employees, improve social responsibility, or reduce litigation n. They should also be written within the parameters of possible public relations outcomes. For example, this might look like a good objective:

- Increase sales of product X by 20% over the next 6 months among younger consumers (ages 18–24).

Howeve r, there are many variables that contribute to increased sales of the product that are not under the control of public relations such as price, product quality, and availability.

Unless the public relations effort can be isolated to show that it was the variable that moved the needle on sales (such as positive publicity in one market that showed increases to sales while all other elements in the marketing mix remained the same), you may be setting yourself up for failure. And, if sales do increase, you will not be able to take credit for the increase because of the other important variables. You would have to share credit with marketing, quality control, and sales representatives. Public relations can contribute to this larger goal through increased awareness, improved attitudes, and possible consumer trials of the product. Provided that the product is of high quality, reasonably priced, and available to consumers, these activities should contribute to increased sales. So the following might be the reworked objective:

- Increase awareness of product X among young consumers (18–24) by 20% within the next 6 months.

Generally there is a hierarchy to the different levels of objectives. Lindenmann identified three levels of objectives: outputs, outtakes, and outcomes.Lindenmann (2003).

As mentioned previously, **output** objectives are focused on the effectiveness of meeting strategies such as the number of placed messages in the media, the size of the audience that received the message, the percentage of positive messages that were contained in the stories, and so forth. It is helpful to measure output objectives because they provide a good indicator of how well the strategy has been implemented. However, they are not considered objectives as defined in this section because they are not ends but means to an end. For example, an output objective might read, “Place 30 stories in prominent newspapers about the product in the next 3 months.” This is a means to the end of increasing awareness and could be measured by the output of the message but not the impact of the message. Therefore, output objectives should be relegated to the strategies section.

Outtake objectives are focused on increasing awareness, understanding, and retention of the key message points. It is far more important to know that the audience received the message than whether it was sent out. For example, you may send out a message in an employee newsletter that reaches 10,000 employees. You need to be more concerned on the impact that message had than the number of people it reached.

Outcome objectives are perhaps the most important, but also the most difficult to achieve. For example, let's say the public relations program is for the state highway patrol to increase awareness of the importance of seatbelt usage and the objective is to decrease the number of fatalities caused by not using a seatbelt. There is a diffusion process that occurs with adoption of this behavior. First, drivers need to be aware and understand the safety advantages of seatbelts. Next, they need to have a positive attitude about wearing seatbelts. Finally, this positive attitude will hopefully translate to increased use of seatbelts. However, because people are not always the rational beings we would like them to be, there is a declining measure of success at each level. People who know what is good for them do not always like it. "But seatbelts are uncomfortable." "What if the seatbelt traps me in the car after an accident?" "Seatbelts wrinkle my clothes." Even if someone has a positive attitude toward an issue, they may still not behave congruently with the attitude. It could be out of habit, laziness, or dysfunction. So to increase behaviors by 30%, attitude needs to increase by a higher level (50%) and awareness by an even higher level (80%).

Once the goal of the public relations program and measurable objectives have been established, it is time to turn attention to **strategies**. Strategies provide the means by which objectives are reached. There are certain elements that should be included in this step. First, identify what is trying to be accomplished with each public (tie the strategy to an objective). Second, segment audiences based on common characteristics. Third, create communication strategies that are focused on the self-interests of the publics. And, fourth, identify how publics will be reached with messages or actions.

Tie Strategy to Objective

Too often public relations programs have been primarily tactical and have skipped the strategic step of creating objectives. Public relations professionals are doers and often want to get to the action first. However, too many tactics have been executed because of tradition ("We always send out press releases") than because of strategy. What makes public relations strategic is having the action tied to the real needs of the organization. If you come up with a really clever tactic but it does not help meet any objectives it should be seriously reconsidered. Far too many resources often are wasted on creative tactics and fall short of addressing the needs of the issue. At the same time, brainstorming on strategies may lead to a legitimate idea that was not considered during the objectives phase, and it may require reevaluating the objectives. But if a strategy cannot be tied to an essential outcome, then it should not be executed.

Segment Audiences

All groups within publics should be differentiated based on common characteristics such as demographics, geographics, or psychographics. Demographics include variables such as gender, income, level of education, and ethnicity. Females may be connected to the issue very differently than males. College graduates may have different attitudes than high school graduates. Geographics describe your public by their location. People living within a thousand feet of a pipeline may have different attitudes toward energy companies than those who live a mile or farther from those lines. Psychographics segment your audience based on their values and lifestyles. People who are single, adventurous, drive fast cars, and spend a lot of their income on entertainment may have very different opinions about seatbelts than people who have small children, drive minivans, and invest most of their money on securities. It is important to segment your key publics because it will help you identify their self-interests.

Create Communication Based on Self-Interests

People pay more attention to communications that are tied to their values, needs, and goals. You should ask yourself what your publics value and care about (based on research). Knowing the demographic, geographic, and/or psychographic differences of key publics, you can create a message that connects them to your program. For example, for young adventurous drivers you may want to show how seatbelts allow them to have more fun by showing how someone on a curvy road stays snug in the seat, whereas someone without a seatbelt is sliding around and has less control. Meanwhile, a soccer mom would be more interested in seatbelt safety messages geared toward children. Once the self-interests have been identified, a primary message can be created that will give direction to the communication efforts. These can become slogans if they are clever and effective enough. The "Click it or Ticket" campaign uses the threat of police monitoring to encourage compliance. For the young adventurous drivers it might be more effective to have a message from sports adventurists such as race car drivers or stunt drivers explain how they rely on seatbelts.

Choose Communication Channels

The last element in the strategy is identifying the channel or medium through which you can reach target publics. The channels can be mass media, such as newspapers or television or radio programming. They can be transmitted by other mediated channels such as e-mail, blogs, or Twitter. They can also be town hall meetings, mediated slide shows, and face-to-face (interpersonal) communication. Sometimes the channel is a group of people, usually opinion leaders, such as teachers, scientists, doctors, or other experts. For example, if we wanted to reach parents in our seatbelt campaign, information kits could be sent to teachers to use in classrooms with students. These materials could be designed to take home and complete with parents. The messages found in these kits could be supported with billboards and radio public service announcements, reaching parents while they are driving. Usually the target audience is reached through multiple points of contact to reinforce the message.

So the following could be one strategy for the seatbelt campaign: "Appeal to young parents' concern for family safety through educational materials that require interaction between parents and their children enrolled in elementary schools." Often, there are several strategies for each public and for each objective.

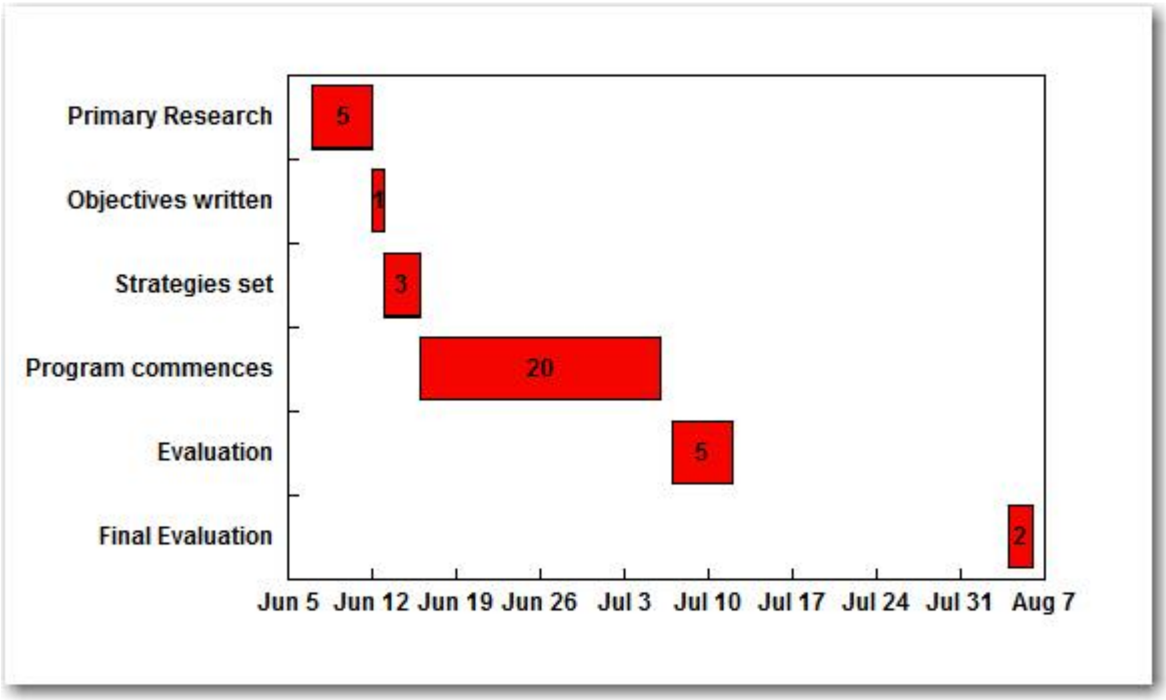
The most creative element in the strategic planning stage is the **tactic**. Tactics are the specific communication tools and tasks that are used to execute the strategy. In the case of the seatbelt campaign, the tactics would be the elements found in the educational kit, such as crossword puzzles, coloring books, or interactive games. They would also be the billboards, public service announcements, Internet Web sites, social media applications, and other materials. The challenge is to create tactics that cut through the clutter of all the messages competing for the audience's attention. A great deal of brainstorming takes place during this stage to develop the most creative and clever messages, designs, and activities. However, there is also the temptation to get carried away with the creativity and lose sight of the tactics' purposes. A cardinal rule is to always evaluate your tactics within established strategies and objectives.

Step 3: Communication Implementation

The best public relations programs include both communication and action. The old adage "actions speak louder than words" is as true for public relations as it is for other business disciplines. Sometimes an organization needs to act, or react, before it can communicate. For example, if employees are not attending training seminars it might not be enough to try more creative and persuasive messages. The seminars might need to be more relevant and interesting for the employees providing something to communicate that might change behaviors. Organizations should not only expect stakeholders to behave in ways that benefit the organization; sometimes the organization needs to change its actions and behaviors to improve these critical relationships.

Two additional components to the public relations process usually are developed during the communication and action stage: the **planning calendar** and the **budget**. Once the tactics have been determined it is best to plan the development and execution of the tactics using a calendaring tool such as a Gantt chart (see Figure 9.2 "Sample Gantt Chart (Numbers Within Bars Are Days to Accomplish Task)"). A Gantt chart is a horizontal flow chart that provides a graphic illustration of when tasks should begin and end in comparison to all other tasks.

Figure 9.2 Sample Gantt Chart (Numbers Within Bars Are Days to Accomplish Task)



The costs for developing, distributing, and executing the tactics should also be determined. You might want to start with the wish list of all tactics and pare them down to those that will provide the greatest return on investment. Some tactics may fall by the wayside when you project their costs against their potential of meeting your objectives.

Step 4: Evaluation

According to Paine, four concerns should be addressed when evaluating the effectiveness of a public relations campaign:

- Define your benchmark.
- Select a measurement tool.
- Analyze data, draw actionable conclusions, and make recommendations.
- Make changes and measure again.Paine (2007).

If you have followed the st eps in the public relations process then you have already identified your audiences and established objectives for each. If your objectives are measurable then you already have the criteria by which to evaluate the success of your program. If you set the objective of increasing awareness by 40% then a **benchmark has been set against which** to measure. The benchmark compares your current situation to your past. Paine also recommends comparing the data gathered to other organizations, such as key competitors. **Comparative analysis** makes the data much more relevant. Instead of knowing how much press coverage has been achieved; it can be compared to how much the competition is getting to determine what is called share of voice.

Based on this evaluation, the tools that will best help measure against stated criteria are selected. Generally, the same tools that helped establish the benchmark data are used. If primary research was used to establish benchmarks then the same methods are repeated to evaluate success. If you surveyed employees to establish awareness and attitude benchmarks, then a follow-up survey is the obvious measurement tool. If you used attendance at employee meetings to establish behavior benchmarks, then counting attendance after the public relations program is the appropriate measurement tool. As noted previously, primary research is the most expensive and requires the most expertise, but it is the best measure of the real impact of a public relations effort on stated outcome objectives, such as changes in awareness, attitudes, and behavior.

Probably the most popular evaluation tools used in public relations measure the output objectives. There are several ways to measure the effectiveness of communication output, but some are better than others. One of the earliest methods was clip counting. A clip is an article, broadcast story, or online message that mentions the company or product. You can either hire a clipping service or collect your own clips. At the end of a predetermined period, the number of clips obtained is examined. This measure is the most simple and convenient way to measure output and is one way to monitor media coverage. It is also the least informative because you do not know what the clips mean (they are only counted, not evaluated) except that, perhaps, it has stroked the egos of some senior management by getting their names in the media.

Many public relations measurement services will analyze media coverage to evaluate the **percentage of articles** that contain program key messages, the **prominence of the message** (for a press release, whether it was printed on page 1 versus page 16; in a broadcast, how much time was allocated to the story and where it appears in the program), the **tone of the message** (positive, neutral, negative), and how the media efforts compare with key competitors (**share of voice**). These organizations provide metrics that help establish benchmarks pertaining to program output objectives and strategies. However, to know if these communications actually affected people's awareness, understanding, attitudes, or behaviors, primary research such as surveys needs to be conducted.

Evaluation and measurement should not take place only at the end of your efforts. You should be monitoring the media constantly to determine whether your message is available for people to see (what advertisers call "reach," public relations professionals call "opportunities-to-see," or OTS). If the media strategy is not working, course corrections in the middle of the program are required, not after the program has been completed.

Although sophisticated measures of communication output have been developed over the years, it is still more critical to consider the outtake and outcomes of those messages. Getting the communication into various channels, be they traditional or new media, is only the means to the end of affecting attitudes, opinions, and behaviors. The outcomes need to be measured in order to tie back to organizational goals and purposes.

Cost comparisons between public relations and advertising messages are not generally used or encouraged as an evaluation tool because of the difficulty in measuring the actual impact of these messages. However, we do know that although public relations and advertising generate the same amount of product awareness, brand recall, and purchase intention, public relations content produces higher levels of product knowledge and positive product evaluation than advertising.Stacks and Michaelson (2009), pp. 1–22.

To measure attitudes and opinions, the most popular tool remains the survey. Public opinion polls and attitude surveys can be conducted and compared to benchmarks to determine whether the messages and behaviors of an organization have had the intended effect. Intentions to behave and preferences for purchasing can also be measured through surveys, providing some figures on people's inclinations.

Behaviors can also be measured against benchmarks. Increases in employee retention, increased donations, and improved sales and investments could all be used to measure behaviors. Often the connection between communication strategy and behavioral changes could be due to other variables, so it is important to isolate and track the impact of the public relations efforts in order to evaluate whether they are the driving force in the change.

- TTAA Marketing: affinity programs: credit cards, phone cards, corporate sponsorships, layout, design of printed materials, advertising for the techsan, insurance programs, class ring program, legacy program, multi media and communications, web page maintenance, social networks
- Membership: acquire new members, retaining old members, undergraduate membership program, student alumni board,
- McKenzie-Merket Alumni Center- 3.5 million facility (1996)/ debt free, $4 million expansion, all TTAA events, Open to student groups, staff, faculty and the general public, greatly increased out visibility, over 600 events per year
- Frazier Alumni Pavilion: 1.6 million facility, game day open to members only, student groups, staff, faculty and general public, new masked rider statue

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Factors influencing Perception in Organizational behaviour

A number of factors operate to shape and sometimes distort perception. These factors residei.

i. In the perceiver
ii. In the object or target being perceived or
iii. In the context of the situation in which the perception is made.

Characteristics of Perception in Organisational Behaviour

Characteristics of the Perceiver

Several characteristics of the perceiver can affect perception. When an individual looks at a target and attempts to interpret what he or she, that interpretation is heavily influenced by personal characteristics of individual perceiver. The major characteristics of the perceiver influencing perception are:

A. **Attitudes:** The perceiver's attitudes affect perception. For example, suppose Mr. X is interviewing candidates for a very important position in his organization –a position that requires negotiating contracts with suppliers, most of whom are male. Mr X may feel that women are not capable of holding their own in tough negotiations. This attitude will doubtless affect his perceptions of the female candidates he interviews.
B. **Moods:** Moods can have a strong influence on the way we perceive someone. We think differently when we are happy than we do when we are depressed. In addition, we remember information that is consistent with our mood state better than information that is inconsistent with our mood state. When in a positive mood, we form more positive impression of others. When in a negative mood, we tend to evaluate others unfavourably.
C. **Motives:** Unsatisfied needs or motives stimulate individuals and may exert a strong influence on their perceptions. For example, in an organizational context, a boss who is insecure perceives a subordinate's efforts to do an outstanding job as a threat to his or her own position. Personal insecurity can be transferred into the perception that others are out to "get my job", regardless of the intention of the subordinates.

D. **Self-Concept:** Another factor that can affect social perception is the perceivers' self-concept. An individual with a positive self-concept tends to notice positive attributes in another person. In contrast, a negative self-concept can lead a perceiver to pick out negative traits in another person. Greater understanding of self allows us to have more accurate perceptions of others.

E. **Interest:** The focus of our attention appears to be influenced by our interests. Because our individual interests differ considerably, what one person notices in a situation can differ from what others perceive. For example, the supervisor who has just been reprimanded by his boss for coming late is more likely to notice his colleagues coming late tomorrow than he did last week. If you are preoccupied with a personal problem, you may find it hard to be attentive in class.

F. **Cognitive Structure:** Cognitive structure, an individual's pattern of thinking, also affects perception. Some people have a tendency to perceive physical traits, such as height, weight, and appearance, more readily. Others tend to focus more on central traits, or personality dispositions. Cognitive complexity allows a person to perceive multiple characteristics of another person rather than attending to just a few traits.

G. **Expectations:** Finally, expectations can distort your perceptions in that you will see what you expect to see. The research findings of the study conducted by Sheldon S Zalkind and Timothy W Costello on some specific characteristics of the perceiver reveal.

- Knowing oneself makes it easier to see others accurately.
- One's own characteristics affect the characteristics one is likely to see inothers.
- People who accept themselves are more likely to be able to see favourable aspects of other people.
- Accuracy in perceiving others is not a single skill.

These four characteristics greatly influence how a person perceives others in the environmental situation.

Characteristics of the Target

Characteristics in the target that is being observed can affect what is perceived. Physical appearance plays a big role in o ur perception of others. Extremely attractive or unattractive individuals are more likely to be noticed in a group than ordinary liking individuals. Motion, sound, size and other attributes of a target shape the way we see it.

Physical appearance plays a big role in our perception of others. The perceiver will notice the target's physical features like height, weight, estimated age, race and gender.

Perceivers tend to notice physical appearance characteristics that contrast with the norm, that are intense, or that are new or unusual. Physical attractiveness often colour our entire impression of another person. Interviewers rate attractive candidates more favourably and attractive candidates are awarded higher starting salaries.

Verbal communication from targets also affects our perception of them. We listen to the topics they speak about, their voice tone, and their accent and make judgements based on this input.

Non-verbal communication conveys a great deal of information about the target. The perceiver deciphers eye contact, facial expressions, body movements, and posture all inan attempt to form an impression of the target.

The perceiver, who observes the targ et's behaviour, infers the intentions of the target.

For example, if our manager comes to our office door way, we think "oh no! he is going to give me more work to do". Or we may perceive that his intention is to congratulate us on a recent success. In any case, the perceiver's interpretation of the target's intentions affects the way the perceiver views the target.

Targets are not looked at in isolation, the relationship of a target to its background influences perception because of our tendency to group close things and similar things together.

Objects that are close to each other will tend to be perceived together rather than separately. As a result of physical or time proximity, we often put together objects or events that are unrelated. For examples, employees in a particular department are seen as a group. If two employees of a department suddenly resign, we tend to assume their departures were related when in fact, they might be totally unrelated.

People, objects or events that are similar to each other also tend to be grouped together. The greater the similarity, the greater the probability we will tend to perceive them as a group.

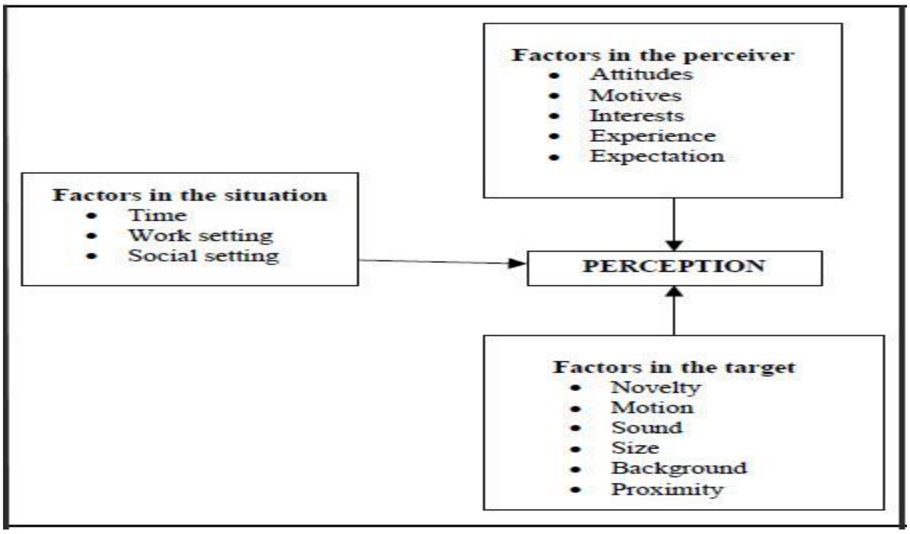
Characteristics of the Situation

The situation in which the interaction between the perceiver and the target takes place has an influence on the perceiver's impression of the target. For example, a professor may not notice his 20-year-old female student in a bikini at the swimming pool. Yet the professor will notice the same girl if she comes to his organizational behaviour class in a bikini. In the same way, meeting a manager in his or her office affects your impression in a certain way that may contrast with the impression you would form had you met the manager in a restaurant.

The strength of the situational cues also affects social perception. Some situations provide strong cues as to appropriate behaviour. In these situations, we assume that the individual's behaviour can be accounted for by the situation, and that it may not reflect the individual's disposition. This is the discounting principle in social perception. For example, you mayen counter an automobile sales person who has a warm and personable manner, asks you about your work and hobbies, and seems genuinely interested in your taste in cars. Can you assume that this behaviour reflects the sales person's personality? You probably cannot, because of the influence of the situation. This person is trying to sell you a car, and in this particular situation he probably treats all customers in this manner.

Factors Influencing Perception

Factors that Influence Perception



Frequently Used Shortcuts in judging others: Perceiving and interpreting what others do is burdensome. As a result, individuals develop techniques for making the task more manageable. These techniques are not fool proof. Several factors lead us to form inaccurate impressions of others. These barriers to perception are inaccurate impressions of others. These barriers to perception are

1. **Selective Perception:** We receive a vast amount of information. Therefore, it is impossible for us to assimilate everything we see - on eye certain stimuli can be taken.

That is why their boss may reprimand some employees for doing something that when done by another employee goes unnoticed. Since, we can't observe everything going on about us, we engage in selective perception.

Selective perception is also out tendency to choose information that supports our view points; Individuals often ignore information that makes them feel uncomfortable or threatens their view points.

Selective perception allows us to "speed-read" others, but not without the risk of drawing an inaccurate picture. Because we see what we want to see, we can draw unwarranted conclusions from an ambiguous, perception tends to be influenced more by an individual's attitudes, interests, and background than by the stimulus itself.

2. **Stereotype:** A stereotype is a generalization about a group of people. When we judge someone on the basis of our perception of the group to which he or she belongs, we are using the shortcut called stereo typing. Stereo types reduce information about other people to a workable level, and they are efficient for compiling and using information. It is a means of simplifying a complex world and it permits us to maintain consistency. It is less difficult to deal with an unmanageable number of stimuli if we use stereo types. Stereo types can be accurate, and when they are accurate, they can be useful perceptual guidelines. However, most of the times stereotypes are inaccurate.

   Attractiveness is a powerful stereo type. We assume that attractive individuals are also warm, kind, sensitive, poised, sociable, outgoing, independent, and strong. Are attractive people sociable, outgoing, independent, and strong? Are attractive people really like this? Certainly all of them are not.

   In organizations, we frequently hear comments that represent stereo types based on gender, age, nationality etc. From a perceptual stand point, if people expect to see this stereo type, that is what they will perceive, whether it's accurate or not.

3. **Halo Effect:** The halo error in perception is very similar to stereo typing. Where as in stereo typing the person is perceived according to a single category, under the halo effect the person is perceived on the basis of one trait.

   When we draw a general impression about an individual based on a single characteristic, such as intelligence, sociability or appearance, a halo effect is operating. The propensity for the halo effect to operate is not random. Research suggests it is likely to be most extreme when the traits to be perceived are ambiguous in behavioural terms, when the traits have moral over tones, and when the perceiver is judging traits with which he or she has limited experience. Example of halo effect is the extremely attractive women secretary who is perceived by her male boss as being an intelligent, good performer, when, in fact, she is a poor typist.

4. **First-impression error:** Individuals place a good deal of importance on first impressions. First impressions are lasting impressions. We tend to remember what we perceive first about a person, and some times we are quite reluctant to change our initial impressions. First - impression error means the tendency to form lasting opinions about an individual based on initial perceptions. Primacy effects can be particularly dangerous in interviews, given that we form first impressions quickly and that these impressions may be the basis for long-term employment relationships.
5. **Contrast Effect:** Stimuli that contrast with the surrounding environment are more likely to be selected for attention than the stimuli that blends in. A contrasting effect can be caused by colour, size or any other factor that is unusual (any factor that distinguishes one stimulus from others at present). For example, a man walking down the street with a pair of crutches is more attention getting than a common man. A contrast effect is the evaluation of a person's characteristics that are affected by comparisons with other people recently encountered that rank higher or lower on the same characteristics. The "contrast" principle essentially states that external stimuli that stands out against the background or which are not what are expecting well receive their attention. The contrast effect also explains why a male students stands out in a crowd of female students. There is nothing unusual about the male students but, when surrounded by females, he stands out.

   An illustration of how contrast effects operate in an interview situation in which one sees a pool of job applicants. Distortions in any given candidate's evaluation can occur as a result of his or her place in the interview schedule. The candidate is likely to receive a more favourable evaluation if preceded by mediocre applicants, and a less favourable evaluation if preceded by strong applicants.

6. **Projection:** It is easy to judge others if we assume they are similar to us. This tendency to attribute one's own characteristics to other people is called projection.

   Projection can distort perceptions made about others. People who engage in projection tend to perceive others. According to what they they are like rather than according to what the person being observed is really like. When managers engage in projection, they compromise their ability to respond to individual differences.

They tend to see people as more homogeneous than they really are.

7. **Implicit Personality Theories:** We tend to have our own mini-theories about how people look and behave. These theories help us organize our perceptions and take shortcuts instead of integrating new information all the time. Implicit-personality theory is opinions formed about other people that are based on our own mini theories about how people behave. For example we believe that girls dressed in fashionable clothes will like modern music and girls dressed in traditional dress like saree will like Indian classical music. These implicit personality theories are barriers because they limit out ability to take in new information when it is available.
8. **Self-Fulfilling Prophecies:** Self-fulfilling prophecies are the situation in which our expectations about people affect our interaction with them in such a way that our expectations are fulfilled. Self -fulfilling prophecy is also known as the **Pygmalion effect,** named after a sculptor in Greek mythology who carved a statue of a girl that came to life when he prayed for this wish and it was granted.

The Pygmalion effect has been observed in work organizations as well. A manager's expectations of an individual affect both the manager's behaviour toward the individual and the individual's response. For example, suppose a manager has an initial impression of an employee as having the potential to move up within the organization. Chances are that the manager will spend a great deal of time coaching and counselling the employee, providing challenging assignments and grooming the individual for success

How to improve your decision making?

One of the crucial tests of a communicator is winning the approval of senior management for a recommended strategy, whether it relates to communication or more general management issues. A bullet proof way to present a strategy to top management and the executive committee is to work to the following formula.

James Lukaszewski, one of the most experienced US PR consultants says it is proven in use. Prepare, and if necessary, present, a document with the following format:

- **Situation.** A brief description of the nature of the issue, problem or situation that requires decision, action or study.
- **The goa**l. A clear, concise statement of the task to be accomplished, or the target to be reached, and why.
- **Analysis/assumptions.** A brief description of what the situation means, its implications and the assumptions central to the analysis. Managers always need to know why, but not in great detail.
- **Options.** Always provide at least three response options for the situation as presented and analyzed – preferably four options to limit the number of times a middle option may be chosen merely on the basis that it is the middle ground. If there is only one recommendation, which is questioned, it will most likely die and the discussion will move out of your control. The 'do nothing' option should be included in every strategy. The optimal choice should be recommended and the fallback recommendations should be supportable. Be prepared to do something in between the things that have been recommended.
- **Recommendation**. The recommendation is obviously based on the line of action that has the strongest case. At the same time, be prepared to walk through an analysis of each of other options proposed.
- Unintended consequences. These are the reactions or circumstances that could arise from suggested options or by doing nothing. Inadequate provision for consequences (risk management) can sabotage an otherwise useful strategy.

This is a structured approach leading to productive, focused planning. If you use it, you will be able to put robust recommendations for important strategies for decision making at the highest level.