



Pearson LCCI Level 3 Certificate in

Public Relations and Media Relations



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CHAPTER 1

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS ENVIRONMENT

Learning Objectives

1.1 The public relations environment

Knowledge and understanding of the purpose and types of public relations.

1.2 PR publics and users

Knowledge and understanding of types of PR publics and users of PR services.

1.3 Provision of PR services

Knowledge and understanding of PR services provided to individuals and organisations, how and why each of these is supplied.

1.4 Public relations activities

Knowledge and understanding of types of public relations activities and be able to create short press releases.

1.1

The public relations environment

Purpose of public relations

Public relations (PR) is undertaken on behalf of an organisation or individual (for example, a celebrity or politician) to build, protect or enhance their reputation. An organisation or individual's reputation is also referred to as their 'brand image' and it is a PR professional's role to help ensure that an organisation or individual's brand image/reputation is viewed in a positive light.

Reputation or brand image is not something which can be easily measured or valued but the term 'goodwill' is often used as a (subjective) measure of how well-known and/or well-regarded a brand is.

PR involves communicating and building relations with a range of 'publics'. The term publics means the groups or audiences with which an organisation or individual needs to communicate. Another commonly used word for publics is 'stakeholders' and the term should not to be confused with the term public, which refers to the wider general public.

PR aims to persuade investors, customers, partners, sponsors, employees and other stakeholders to maintain a certain point of view about an organisation or individual, including its leadership, products or decisions. PR may help to support an organisation's business objectives and strategy by building favourable relationships with its publics, for example by:

- **building long-term relationships with customers**, using PR to develop customer loyalty and customer advocacy (encouraging customers to promote a positive message about a brand).
- **developing long-term relations with key media contacts** in order to understand their needs and requirements with the aim of gaining positive exposure around their brand.
- **developing long-term relationships with public bodies** such as government agencies or regulatory bodies to **raise awareness of issues** and ensure an organisation's views are understood and visible to policy makers.
- **planning and managing communications activities** that engage publics and **develop or manage an organisation or individual's reputation/brand image**. This can include a range of activities; there is an increasing focus on digital communication and social media, but it also includes print and broadcast media and events.

PR as part of the marketing mix

Public relations forms part of what is commonly referred to as the '**marketing mix**'. The marketing mix is defined as a set of tools that an organisation uses to pursue its marketing goals and objectives.

The marketing mix is also often referred to as the 4Ps; product, price, promotion and place. PR, along with advertising, falls under the promotion element within the marketing mix. Its aim is to promote a product, service or brand.

PR differs from advertising, which is generally focused solely on increasing sales, and therefore it is easy to identify a link between expenditure on marketing and increased sales income. This is called 'return on investment' (ROI). It is difficult to identify a return on investment for public relations activity as PR is concerned with building image or brand or reputation and this is difficult to measure in monetary terms.

Another factor which differentiates PR from advertising, is that advertising is generally a 'paid-for' activity whereas PR related promotion or media coverage must be 'earned' (for example, through developing media relations and delivering engaging content).

Management of the media and media relations

Managing relations with the media is an important part of overall PR activity. It is good practice for PR professionals to build strong, long-term relationships with key media contacts to get to know what kind of stories they will be looking for and when. This tends to be much more effective than simply ‘pitching stories’ or ‘issuing press releases’, which may or may not be picked up by the media. This is covered in more detail in Chapter 2.

Examination Tip

You need to be able to explain what is meant by the term ‘public relations’ (PR), why it is used and how it differs from other marketing or communications activity. Specifically, you should understand that the aim of PR is to build, enhance or protect the reputation of an individual or organisation.

Types of PR

Public relations covers a range of specialisms. These specialisms are often characterised by the types of publics with which the PR specialists interact.

Financial PR (investor relations)

This involves looking after the relations with investors, and potential investors, as well as other organisations and interest groups within the industry. The purpose of investor relations is to ensure that current investors retain confidence in an organisation, and that potential investors gain a positive view of the organisation and a good place to invest their money. It is also important to retain investor confidence within the wider sector in which an organisation operates. For example, positive or negative PR around the green/renewable energy sector compared to the tradition oil, gas or coal energy sector can influence investment decisions.

Consumer/lifestyle PR

This is a growing area of PR focused on consumer goods and services. It involves presenting these goods or services as part of a lifestyle to which consumers are encouraged to aspire. Often this type of PR aims to associate influential people such as celebrities with a brand and publicise this association (for example, through magazines and social media).

Crisis communication

This involves looking after the management of publicity around unexpected events. It often involves minimising the negative impact of an event on an organisation or individual’s reputation. However, it can also involve ensuring that organisations get the most impact out of unexpected positive events.

Government relations

This type of PR involves working with government departments, agencies and law makers, usually on behalf of an organisation. This activity is commonly referred to as ‘public affairs’ or ‘lobbying’ and helps to ensure that public bodies are aware of the organisation’s interests and take them into account when developing new policies or regulations.

Community relations

This involves working with communities particularly during periods of change. For example, if an organisation

is planning to undertake some activity which will impact on the local environment, the organisation will seek to put forward their own messaging in a way which helps to gain the support of the local population.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a growing area of PR and is used predominantly by companies (usually large corporates) that are involved in the promotion and publicising of an organisation's support for charitable causes. By associating itself with a popular ethical cause, the company can position itself as a socially and environmentally responsible organisation, thereby showing the company brand in a positive light. This is particularly important if an organisation or individual has been associated (rightly or wrongly) with disreputable behaviour or practices. It is also useful if the sector within which a company operates has been associated with negative PR for example, the discount fashion retail industry (a sector which may have been associated with child labour), or the mining industry (a sector which may have been associated with environmental damage or exploitation).

Employee relations

Employee relations, often known as 'internal communications', helps to build a strong organisational identity and a shared understanding of an organisation's mission. As a result, it can help to promote a satisfied and productive workforce, and ensure that staff who have an outward facing role (for example, customer-facing or media-facing) present a consistent image of the organisation. Employee relations PR is also crucial to ensure that staff are communicated to effectively during times of organisational change.

Examination Tip

You should be able to identify the different types of PR (or PR specialisms) and the purpose of these different types of PR. You should also understand how different types of PR focus on different publics.

1.2

PR publics and users

PR publics

PR publics, sometimes referred to as 'stakeholders', is often used in PR and is defined by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) in the UK as "audiences that are important to [an] organisation". Publics are groups of individuals who have an interest in an organisation or may be impacted by the organisation. However, PR is also used by individuals (for example, celebrities, sportspeople and politicians). It is therefore important to understand that these individuals will also have their own publics.

Types of PR publics

Publics can be very diverse. They often have an active interest in the actions of an organisation/individual (for example, they may be customers, investors or sponsors). However, publics do not have to have an active interest in an organisation or individual; they may be indirectly impacted by the organisation or individual's actions. For example, motorists may experience long delays due to construction of a new housing development. Whilst they may have no particular interest in the housing development they are indirectly impacted by its construction and are therefore considered to be publics.

Some examples of 'publics' are:

- general public
- potential/existing employees
- organisations
- potential/existing customers
- potential/existing suppliers
- potential/existing shareholders
- media representatives
- market analysts
- financial institutions and stock markets
- politicians
- professional and trade bodies
- regulatory bodies
- special interest/pressure groups.

Users of PR services

Public Relations expertise is generally used by individuals or organisations needing to build, protect or enhance their brand or reputation. Individuals who would likely use PR include: celebrities (to gain publicity for their music, movies, books and so on), politicians (to persuade and gain the support of voters), and campaigners (to raise awareness of issues and change behaviours or policies).

Organisations of all sizes across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors use PR. **Central and local governments** use PR (for example, to gain or maintain the support of the voting public, to maintain business confidence, and/or to encourage investment into a country or region). **Companies** use PR to help promote their products and services to customers as well as to build confidence amongst current and future investors and to develop brand support from within their organisation through strong employee relations.

Not-for-profit organisations such as charities and NGOs (non-governmental organisations) use PR to raise awareness of issues amongst supporters and policy-makers, to change attitudes and behaviours and to raise funds to help them carry out their mission.

Examination Tip

You should also know and understand that PR is directed at different publics (groups or individuals) and these publics may be impacted either directly or indirectly by the actions on the organisation or individual seeking PR. You should also know the different users of PR and understand that different types of organisations may seek different outcomes from their PR efforts.

1.3

Provision of PR services

In-house (internal) PR

Some organisations choose to maintain their own in-house (internal) PR department. This means PR experts are directly employed by the organisation, often within a communications, marketing or press/media relations department.

There are many reasons why an organisation may choose to maintain their own internal PR department:

- PR staff will already have a good understanding of the **organisation's mission**, culture and background. PR campaigns may therefore be more authentic and delivered **faster** as staff will not have to learn about the organisation.
- PR staff will be focused solely on the organisation and not distracted by other 'clients'.
- Depending on the size of an in-house PR department, there may be **spare capacity** which can be effectively utilised to deliver PR activity.
- PR staff will probably be employed at a **cheaper** hourly rate than a PR agency will charge.

However, there are on-going costs and obligations associated with maintaining an in-house PR department. The most significant costs and obligations relate to employing staff. For this reason, PR agencies may be cheaper as they can be appointed on a fee-basis and their services terminated when no longer needed with no on-going staff or office related costs or obligations. Also, internal staff may lack the specialist skills and knowledge of PR agencies particularly if the organisation is delivering a particularly challenging PR campaign.

Functions of an internal PR team

Internal PR teams carry out many functions. These may include:

- **Developing PR strategies and plans** linked to an organisation's business and marketing goals and objectives.
- **Managing press office activities** to deal with requests from the press for stories, comment and interviews, as well as building strong relations with the press in order to gain future coverage.
- **Liaising with marketing and sales departments** to coordinate campaigns in order to ensure a joined-up approach to marketing and PR activities.
- **Building internal networks** of media spokespeople and subject matter experts so that the organisation can present knowledgeable and prepared individuals for comment and interviews.
- **Evaluating effectiveness of PR activities.** This is an essential aspect of all PR campaigns in order to assess the extent to which PR activity has been effective in achieving its goals. It is also useful to learn lessons for future PR campaigns.
- **Reporting on PR activities** to senior management. PR professionals must be prepared to report on their activities to senior management to inform them of what is going well and alert them to any problems or issues.
- **Managing PR budgets.** All PR campaigns will have budgets and it is the responsibility of PR professionals to provide best value for money within these budgets.
- **Managing services** provided to the organisation by an external PR agency or other suppliers. Even when there is an internal PR department there may still be a need to engage external PR agencies (see below) which are supplying additional PR support. PR staff will also be required to engage with suppliers such as suppliers of publicity materials, event venues and so on.

Outsourcing (external) PR

Many individuals and organisations choose to outsource their PR activity to a PR agency. A PR agency is an external organisation which specialises in PR. They can manage some or all of an organisation/individual's PR activity. There are a number of factors which determine whether an organisation or individual will choose to outsource its PR to an external PR agency.

An organisation or individual may choose to appoint an external PR agency to deliver its PR because they require **specialist resources, knowledge and skills**. Even organisations which have their own in-house PR department may seek specialist PR expertise from PR agencies when their internal capacity or knowledge is insufficient. For example, if there is major crisis such as financial mismanagement within an organisation or if a company's products have caused serious injuries, it may be more effective to bring in a PR agency which specialises in crisis management. On the other hand, if a company is experiencing financial difficulties it may decide to bring in a PR agency with expertise in investor relations to ensure that rumours do not affect investor confidence and the value of its shares. It may also need to bring in expertise in employee relations to manage internal communications if it is looking to reduce its staff/make staff redundant.

PR agencies are fee-based so there are no on-going staff costs and obligations beyond the work for which they have been appointed. Therefore, despite potentially high fees, external agencies may be a **flexible, cost-effective** option overall.

External PR agencies carry out many functions, including full-service PR as well as specialist PR services drawing on their specific skills, knowledge and resources.

Skills

Whilst all PR professionals will have strong **writing skills**, some PR agencies specialise in providing professional writers (often referred to as copywriters). Their focus is on content creation rather than other aspects of PR such as communication strategy and dissemination of content.

Some PR agencies also specialise in **events management** which means they are skilled at organising and managing events aimed at promoting a brand, organisation or individual. This could be anything from a product launch to an open day or an awards dinner.

PR agencies tend to have specialists who are expert at **media pitches**. In other words, they can draw on their extensive contacts in, and knowledge of, the media to craft effective, tailored messages to promote a story.

Knowledge

PR agencies may be better placed to help an organisation or individual looking to promote themselves through a particular **type of media**. For example, they may have knowledge of how to use television for the purposes of PR and will be able to identify opportunities to be featured and format material for this specific type of media.

A PR agency may have specific knowledge about media in various **local, national, or international regions**. Their services will be particularly valuable if, for example, a company is looking to begin operating in a different country or continent but has no experience of the media environment there.

Some PR agencies may focus on **specific industries** and have in-depth knowledge of how to engage effectively with the media in that sector. PR agencies may have **specialist knowledge** or **specific PR types** or **specialisms** (for example, government relations, investor relations, community relations or crisis management).

Resources

PR agencies will likely have access to a wide range of **media and celebrity contacts** and have access to useful resources such as **databases, distribution systems** (for example, news wires such as paid for services which provide access to large databases of media contacts to help get stories about your brand to the press).

PR agencies will also have effective systems to **monitor** and **analyse** an organisation or individual's media coverage. PR agencies may have specialist resources and expertise in areas such as **audio-visual** techniques and **photography**.

Examination Tip

You should know and understand why an organisation may wish to maintain its own internal PR team and why an organisation or individual may engage the services of an external PR agency. You should be able to explain the advantages and disadvantages of both in-house PR and external PR agencies.

1.4

Public relations activities

Types of PR activities

The role of a PR professional can be very varied. They may be expected to undertake a wide range of activities in their day-to-day job.

Planning and executing campaigns

A PR campaign is a series of PR activities developed with specific goals (for example, to raise awareness or to change the behaviours of publics or for a specific purpose, such as a product launch or a political election campaign). A PR campaign differs from day-to-day PR activities as a campaign has specific objectives and a limited timeframe. PR specialists plan, manage and measure PR campaigns to ensure that they are delivered effectively and to check if they achieve their intended outcomes.

Managing media and media relations

PR experts build and maintain **databases** of media contacts (for print and online media) in order to target their campaigns appropriately at contacts who are likely to publish their PR stories.

Targeting media contacts, however, tends to be more effective when PR experts have built long-term relationships with contacts within the media. This involves **developing and managing relationships** with journalists, being aware of key industry publications, researching which types of media and publications are relevant and what type of content media contacts are looking for.

These days, **social media management** also plays a significant role in a PR professional's job. It can include creating, publishing and sharing relevant content as well as moderating and mediating content posted by publics. It is important to respond to comments and feedback from publics in a timely and appropriate way which will reflect well on a brand's reputation. Where a PR professional creates content for social media (or any other online media) they will need to ensure that it is optimised for search engines. Search engine optimisation or SEO is covered in more detail in Chapter 2.

Developing messages to be communicated

PR experts are closely involved in the development of key messages to be communicated to publics. Any key messages developed on behalf of an organisation require PR professionals to work closely with senior management in order to ensure that any messages accurately reflect the mission and values of the organisation. In structuring key messages there are a number of tools which can be used to help plan out and structure content, including message mapping and storyboarding.

Message mapping

This is a way of creating content which is mapped to particular audiences (publics). It helps PR professionals to craft messages which are relevant to each audience. In this way they can develop messages from an audience perspective, highlighting why the organisation is beneficial to the particular audience and taking into account what the audience knows or does not know already about the organisation or individual. They also tend to include supporting messages or proof points which provide evidence of the credentials of an organisation/individual (for example, experience, success stories and staff expertise).

Storyboarding

This is a planning tool to help organise content and is a great way to help the creative process. It can be done on a piece of paper or through dedicated story boarding software and it involves planning content in a visual manner (a little like a comic book strip). It is particularly useful in today's media environment which focuses increasingly on visual content (for example, videos, photography, infographics, memes and slides) as well as written content.

Producing a press release

A press release (sometimes also called a 'news release' or 'media release') is an official written communication provided to the media to provide information on something newsworthy about an organisation/individual, in the hope that it will lead to publicity.

The ability to prepare a good press release is an important skill for PR professionals and involves researching content, writing the press release itself and distributing it, either directly to relevant media contacts or via a news agency or news wire, which is a service which distributes press releases to a database of media contacts. More detailed information on how to prepare a press release can be found in Chapter 3.

Thought leadership

Thought leadership is a form of PR in which organisations and individuals put forward their opinions on various issues. It can help them stand out as an expert or an authority in a particular field. It also familiarises their audiences with their views and helps to build the brand's reputation as trustworthy and reliable. It can be an effective way of engaging with public bodies such as law and policy makers on relevant issues and it builds relationships with customers, investors and sponsors by helping them to develop a clear picture of an organisation or individual's brand values. A PR professional can help organisations or individuals to promote their thought leadership through publications and broadcasts (both online and offline). It can be developed in a variety of ways, such as:

- Publishing the organisation or individual's own views in '**opinion pieces**' or articles (in magazines, newspapers or trade press), or through more in-depth reports (often termed 'white papers').
- **Commissioning** or publicising research from external **experts** in specialist subjects in support of the organisation or individual's viewpoints.

Developing brand advocates

Increasingly, PR professionals are tasked with developing brand advocates. Brand advocates are supporters of a brand (organisation or individual) who are happy to 'spread the word' about it and promote it in a positive light to a wider audience. Brand advocates will typically promote the brand through 'word of mouth' or through social media (often with images and the use of hashtags). PR professionals will often seek to develop highly influential brand advocates such as popular bloggers (or vloggers) or other celebrities. Brand advocates are similar to brand ambassadors who perform a similar function but tend to be paid to promote the brand.

Managing corporate sponsorship

PR professionals may also be responsible for managing corporate sponsorship. Sponsorship is an effective way for brands to gain publicity and to align themselves with certain causes or activities (such as charitable events or sporting competitions). Sponsorship management involves seeking out relevant opportunities, building relationships and presenting a positive brand image. PR professionals may also be tasked with seeking external sponsorship for a brand which they manage. This is often the case for individuals (for example, professional sports people or charities, NGOs and sporting teams). This role again involves identifying suitable sponsors, building relationships and presenting a positive brand image.

Employee communications

Internal employee communications is another area that PR professionals may focus on; writing newsletters, preparing announcements, managing internal social media (such as intranets), organising events and developing awareness campaigns. They may also conduct **media training** to ensure that staff who will appear in the media (particularly through broadcast interviews) are able to present key messages effectively.

The role of a PR professional can be very varied and involve a wide range of activities (depending on specific job descriptions). In addition to those activities detailed above the role may include: creating **speaker opportunities** (conferences, panels), **writing speeches**, organising **events** (such as press conferences, product launches, parties, face-to-face meetings, public meetings and conferences), developing and updating **website content**, managing **social media** channels and activity and tracking and reporting on the **results of PR activities**.

Examination Tip

You should be familiar with the main activities undertaken by PR professionals, including managing PR campaigns, managing relationships with the media, writing a press release, developing brand advocates, thought leadership, event management and updating web and social media content. You should also understand what the various PR activities involve and how and why they are used by PR professionals in their day-to-day role. You will be required to apply your knowledge to real life PR contexts/scenarios and be able to create a short press release.

Chapter 1 Summary

What you have learned:

- The purpose and the different types (specialisms) of public relations, and PR's relationship as part of the wider marketing mix.
- The different types of PR publics and the users of PR services.
- PR as a service provision to individuals and organisations, and how and why each service is supplied, including the difference between internal (in-house) and external (PR agencies) PR services, and the advantages and disadvantages of each.
- The different types or PR activities.

Activity

- 1.1 Read the following information about 'Billy's Burgers'. Then match the actions taken by Billy's Burgers to the PR specialisms below.

Billy's Burgers is a national burger chain. There are approximately 50 Billy's Burger restaurants around the country serving food to eat in and to take away.

Recently Billy's Burgers has received a lot of negative publicity because it uses food packaging which cannot be recycled. Many people have stopped eating at the restaurants because they are concerned about the impact it has on the environment. As a result, the restaurant chain's wealthy investors are concerned about the recent falling sales and the impact this has had on the company's profits.

Billy's Burgers has recently taken steps to change its packaging and the company's PR department has been tasked with managing a campaign to counter any negative publicity and promote a positive view of the Billy's Burgers brand. The restaurant chain now uses burger wrappers which can be recycled, it only provides plastic straws to customers if they ask for them and it offers a discount on drinks served in re-usable cups.

Community relations

Billy's Burgers introduced branded reusable cups and encouraged customers to post photos of themselves drinking from them on social media.

Investor relations

Senior staff have volunteered to pick up litter in local parks near Billy's Burgers restaurants.

Consumer/lifestyle
PR

Staff have been informed about the environmentally-friendly policy and encouraged to offer customers reusable cups.

Employee relations

The CEO of Billy's Burgers has given an interview to be featured in the financial supplement of a national newspaper.



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