

ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN CRISIS

By Shivanjali Talari

Abstract

Public Relation is an important function of organization as it helps in creating and maintaining the reputation of the organization. The reputation and image of the organization needs utmost care during the crisis, pre-crisis and post crisis phase. This paper provides detail information about how should be the reputation and image of the company should be protected during the crisis. What is the important tool while managing the crisis and how it needs to be handled by the public relation officer and how he protects the organization.

Keywords

Public relation, crisis

Objectives:

- To study in detailed about the Public relation and its function.
- To study the types of crisis in a company.
- To study the role of Public relation in managing crisis of company.

The research paper is based on information collected from secondary sources after the detailed study. An attempt has been made to present the detailed study of role of Public relation in managing crisis.

Introduction:

Public

Public means a group of people having common interest or characteristics; Communities of people at large that have an indirect or direct alliance with an organization: customers, employees, investors, media, students, etc.

Relation

Relations between people, groups, or countries are contacts between them and the way in which they behave towards each other.

Public relations

PR or public relations is nothing but the practice of protecting as well as enhancing the reputation of any particular organization/firm or for that matter any individual. In today's world of fierce competition, where every organization strives hard to work toward its brand image, public relations have become the need of the hour. It is essential for every organization to communicate well with its public/target audience. The correct flow of information is essential. Here comes the importance of public relations.

The practice of maintaining a healthy relationship between organization and its public/employees/stakeholders/investors/partners is called public relations. Public relation activities ensure the correct flow of information between the organization and its public also

called its target audience. Public relations goes a long way in maintaining the brand image of an organization in the eyes of its audience, stake holders, investors and all others who are associated with it.

Public Relation Activities

Here are some ways of enhancing an organization's brand image:

1. Addressing the media
2. Speaking at various press conferences, seminars.
3. Advertisements to correctly position the brand, Pamphlets, Brochures, magazines notices, newsletters and so on.
4. Corporate Social responsibility(CSR Activities)
5. Introducing various loyalty schemes for customers like membership cards, premium clubs so as to retain the customers.
6. Various events, shows and activities.

Crisis

Crisis refers to sudden unplanned events which cause major disturbances in the organization and trigger a feeling of fear and threat amongst the employees.

Following are the types of crisis:

1. Natural Crisis

- Disruption in the environment and nature lead to natural crisis.
- Such events cannot be controlled by human being.
- Tornadoes, Earthquakes, Hurricanes, Landslides, Tsunamis, Flood, Drought all are examples of natural disaster.

2. Technological Crisis

- Technological crisis arises is due to failure in technology. Problems in the overall systems lead to technological crisis.

- System breakdown, software failure are few of the examples of technological crisis.

3. Confrontation Crisis

- When employees have conflict among themselves this causes Confrontation Crisis. There is a situation of argument and which leads to boycott, strikes and many other problems
- In such crisis the employee rebel against the superior.
- Internal conflicts, incomplete communication and no coordination give rise to confrontation crisis.

4. Crisis of Malevolence

- Malevolence crisis arises when some scandalous employees take the help of criminal activities and take extreme step to fulfill his demand.
- Acts like manipulating company's officials, false rumors all lead to crisis of malevolence.

5. Crisis of Organizational Misdeeds

- Organizational misleads arises when the management take few decision which is has harmful consequences towards shareholders and external parties.
- In such cases, superiors ignore the after effects of strategies and implement the same for quick results.

Crisis due to Workplace Violence

- When and employees is indulged in beating other employees, physically abuse superiors in the organization's premises is crisis due to workplace violence.

Crisis Due to Rumors

- When any employees of the organization spread untrue rumors about the organization then the organization suffers crisis due to rumors.

Bankruptcy

- When an organization is not in a situation to pay his creditors and other parties then this crisis arises.
- Lack of fund leads to crisis.

Sudden Crisis

- In such situations everything happens suddenly without a prior intimation. This crisis is uncontrollable.

Smoldering Crisis

- Neglecting minor issues in the beginning lead to smoldering crisis later.
- Managers often can foresee crisis but they should not ignore the same and wait for someone else to take action.
- Warn the employees immediately to avoid such a situation.

DUTIES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

A PR has to be dedicated 24/7 to protect the interest of the company; it is a very demanding job.

Below are some duties of Public relations:

- Reputation Management
- Goodwill Creation
- Crisis Management
- PR Strategies and Campaigns
- Press Conference
- Preparing Media Plan
- Coordinating Interviews
- Communication Budget
- Cordial Relations

ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN CRISIS

During crisis the Public relation is quick, accurate and consistent. Communication is the most important tool. At this point of time the PR is on his toe and response quickly to the concern person who needs to be communicated. He scan the external environment and he need to prepare himself to handle the crisis. 'Media framing' is a prevalent approach for a PR practitioner while

speaking to the media during crisis. Media framing is a very important skill for a PR practitioner to tackle crisis. Political parties and governments have often been strong at framing agendas during crisis – many times at the expense of the minorities; one example is how Iran is unable to “frame” the story about nuclear power – it is always associated with seeking to gain nuclear bombs.

During crisis Public relation need to deploy discourse on behalf of organization and he need to frame the stories for his internal and external public.

PR practitioners play a key role in the maintenance and transformation of discourse. Discourse and framing go along together. Discourse consists of arguments deployed by the organization during crisis, including messages, text, vision, brands and reputation to help “frame” an agenda. Media has great power to frame agendas and journalists have great framing skills. Thus, the PR has to anticipate everything, by seeking to build a strong and coherent argument or discourse on behalf of his client. He has to frame the discourse most effectively.

A press conference (where all types of newsrooms are invited), accompanied by an immediate press release from the organization is the best tool of communication which a PR use to disseminate information.

Among all one of the most important task of public relation does in the crisis is to win over rest of the organization of the importance of media which is the important tool of communication which can destroy the communication effort or the overcoming of crisis.

This is because:

- journalists are often the first to find out;
- journalists report early and constant;
- they can forward the message;
- they can prevent the public;

- they quickly decide during the crisis who is credible and who is not;
- if they are avoided, the journalists will find other sources of information, without requiring the organization's official point of view.

The public relations specialist's communication effort work because in the event of a crisis, there is an effective plan for communication in crisis situations, which meet a number of distinct features, which are:

- PR defines the strategies that needs to be implemented when crises occurs;
- PR helps with communication resources and responsibilities;
- PR help to reach the target audience with the key messages;
- PR allows the communication managers to launch public information and media relations campaigns immediately or during the crisis.

Apart from meeting all the above requirements, the PR complete several clearly defined steps without which it could be incomplete or inconsistent, and the both situations may become critical in terms of communication process coordinated and conducted by public relations.

The first step the PR does is to identify potential crisis, step consist in identifying and considering issues and events that may generate a crisis.

The very important step while crisis is to analyze the audience to establish the target audiences of the organization during the crisis which help the PR to outline the entire message which needs to be communicate during the crisis. This analysis of PR highlight target audiences, their place and role, establishing a hierarchy based on relevance and importance.

PR establishes communication team during a crisis is an essential step, it bring together specialists from all fields of the organization and all its major structures.

Apart from preparing a variety of means appropriate to respond to crisis situation the PR establishes the broadcast channels of the crisis messages. Depending on the target audiences,

these channels are: direct channels (briefings, public meetings, phone calls, etc.) and indirect channels (letters e-mails and so on).

A vital step of PR that he establishes a proactive plan of release for media, creating the possibilities of rapid response by identifying the link persons and the contact information for difficult situations, to establish in principle, the time periods and steps in the initial defusing of the crisis.

The public relations manage and coordinate important role of communication process, the partners are not just those who have to support the organization, but also those who will act as opinion leaders and disseminators of information.

Public Relations establish the basic activity of the communication strategy includes:

1. During the first moments from the production of the crisis:
 - Choose the appropriate plan;
 - Gather information about events;
 - Define the nature of the crisis;
 - Confirm initial facts in an initial press release;
 - Prepare materials for the press.
2. Implementing the communication plan:
 - Bring the crisis management team into action;
 - Inform the media through subsequent press releases, documentaries, press releases etc.
 - Declare the actions the organization wants to take in order to solve the problem.
3. The obvious must not be hidden. The press can find out and the credibility of the organization may be lost;
 - Keeps track of the news reports, and how the information provided was used and understood;
 - Content analysis at regular intervals of news released in the press, to understand the trend of information in media;

- Establish the credible messages and sending them through the media.

The communication of crisis is not over with the end of the crisis. The PR needs to continuously analyses the public and media reaction, by content analyzes of all news releases, of comments and questions from personalities and opinion leaders, by listening of the community opinions and by understanding of issues facing as a result of the crisis.

We have seen what steps a Public relation officers needs to take while crisis and he plays a crucial role in it and he defuse the crisis and avoid a crisis of image to develop in the context of an organizational and situational crisis.

Conclusion

Being it a large, medium and small scale organization every organization may experience crisis however is best managed the public relation officers which results in irreparable damage to the business's reputation and goodwill.

While no one can predict a crisis, appropriate foresight and thought can mean the difference between maintaining a stellar corporate reputation and the dreadful alternative. Timing is the essence, taking responsibility is key, and acting responsibly is vital to overcoming a crisis.

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Bio

Ms. Shivanjali Talari is an Asst. Professor in Department of Management Studies, Bharat College. She can be contacted at talarishivanjali1@gmail.com.