

The Role of Public Relations in Organizational Crisis Management

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Abstract— This paper is about the role of public relations in the face of crises whether the crisis is either economic, political, or social. The reason why I chose this topic is because many people do not exactly know what public relations is about, and they also do not know the work of public relations especially in crisis.

Introduction

Public relations has been practiced for thousands of years, but the existence of public relations as a science taught and practiced properly is not only to be achieved in the near future. According to Grunig (2001) said public relations today is a complex profession practiced by hundreds of thousands of people around the world. Some public relations professionals are employed by a single organization. Others work for public relations firms that have many organizations as clients. Public relations people work for businesses, government agencies, professional and trade associations, nonprofit charities, schools and universities, hospitals, hotels, and many more. They work for large and small organizations. Many public relations people work entirely within their own country; others practice their profession on a global basis. However, that public relations has developed from an occupation to a profession in many countries of the world. That is, public relations has been something that people did to earn a salary; but it has not been a discipline for which they studied to prepare for the work. There was no formal education in public relations. There was no scholarly research that provided a body of knowledge that could be taught.

Literature Review

Badi (1991) thinks there is reason behind the emergence of public relations as a profession. This research is specialized economic and social conditions that produced a climate psychologically. Public relations (PR) is directly related to both normal and problematic crises, instability, and disasters. The actual work of public relations became clear only when there is a crisis in the government or institution to analyze and to achieve the ability to work and compete. Here comes the public relations experience in preparedness before the crisis resolved in and out of that place. When exposed to enterprise, image, vibration, and distortion; then it becomes clear the importance of public relations in the consecration of the efforts of all organization of individuals and units, and focus in order to correct this image. As public relations has roles in advertising, propaganda, media relations, research, planning, improved mental image, and campaigns, it also has a very important role in crisis management. Maihoub (n.d) said that PR play a major and active role in the event of crisis, especially that results in unwanted crises reflected on individuals publicly regardless of the type of crisis and level. The reason for this is that the dimensions of the crisis can be social, economic environmental, or even political. Can crises be positive? There is a Chinese saying, "Every crisis gives birth to her a chance"

Defining public relations

Some wonder what public relations is about. Public relations is not just about marketing and advertising, but also it means the difference between death and life for an institution, and the variance between success and failure. There are several definitions that progress on the concept of public relations and there is no one definition of inclusive public relations.

Some see the concept of public relations in light of management thought, or from the point of view of communication and media, marketing or sociology. Public relations has been defined in many different ways, the definition often evolving alongside public relations' changing roles and technological advances. According to Bussey (2011): PR is the art of presenting a company (or person) to the public, usually via the media, ideally in a positive manner that improves the reputation of that company (or person) and subsequently impacts positively on that company's sales/ uptake of that company's services/ the company or individual's overall reputation. (p. 4)

The Role of Public Relations in Crisis Management

Contact is the basis of public relations in crisis management. Achammara (2008) said that the role of public relations in crisis management is not to understand only through the process of contact, which represents the basis of the work of public relations. The contact is important in the subject of dealing with the crisis as an important part of crisis management. Crisis contact based on close ties with the masses in question is definitely the right to protect the reputation of the organization in crises and disasters. On the other hand, the contact on the equally important process in the context of treatment crisis; absence of weak, or cracked communication processes in crises already lead to an increased state of turmoil and exacerbate the losses among the masses related crisis. Others argue that crisis communication includes all the activities and roles of communication practiced during the various stages of the crisis, and falls within the framework of these activities that are all kinds of contact. Regardless, consider the means used, and the implications. The public relations activities, as well as various communication activities and the roles played by organizations and institutions during the crisis, are within the scope of the disaster or crisis communication. Some scholars determine that the crisis communication process conducted by the public relations in the institution concerned at the time of the crisis is the context. The administration successful public relations has three steps to resolve any crisis which are pre-crisis, during a crisis, and post a crisis.

Pre-Crisis Phase

Coombs (2006) the challenges facing the science of crisis management is to try to deal with crises before they occur and adopt this stage planning process; which represents the essential foundation for any effective crisis management. Planning is intended to contribute effectively to prevent potential crises, and to prepare to respond to them when they occur. He said prevention involves seeking to reduce known risks that could lead to a crisis. This is part of an organization's risk management program. Preparation involves creating the crisis management plan, select-

ing and training the crisis management team, and conducting exercises to test the crisis management plan and crisis management team. Both Barton (2001) and Coombs (2006) document that organizations are better able to handle crises when they (1) have a crisis management plan that is updated at least annually, (2) have a designated crisis management team, (3) conduct exercises to test the plans and teams at least annually, and (4) pre-draft some crisis messages. Table 1 lists the Crisis Preparation Best Practices. The planning and preparation allow crisis teams to react faster and to make more effective decisions.

During the crisis

There are a lot of tasks that rests with public relations in institutions during crises, most notably those relating to the mental image of the institution, or the wrong treatment conditions, or management issues, or solve the emergent problems. Apart from the traditional and formal tasks, or generally accepted among managers; there are tasks incumbent on the public relations performed during the crisis. It cannot be understood the role of public relations in crisis management only through the communication process that represents the basis of the work of public relations. Therefore, it is important to contact the subject of dealing with crises; as an important part in its management. It is the public relations communication tasks when you perform its role in the face of crises, and these tasks are as essential to the functions entrusted with this role; whether in the public or inter-com on the outer level of the public.

Post-crisis phase

Coombs the organization is returning to business as usual. The crisis is no longer the focal point of management's attention but still requires some attention. As noted earlier, reputation repair may be continued or initiated during this phase. There is important follow-up communication that is required. First, crisis managers often promise to provide additional information during the crisis phase. The crisis managers must deliver on those informational promises or risk losing the trust of publics wanting the information. Second, the organization needs to release updates on the recovery process, corrective actions, and/or investigations of the crisis. The amount of follow-up communication required depends on the amount of information promised during the crisis and the length of time it takes to complete the recovery process. If you promised a reporter a damage estimate, for example, be sure to deliver that estimate when it is ready. West Pharmaceuticals provided recovery updates for over a year because that is how long it took to build a new facility to replace the one destroyed in an explosion. Coombs reports how mass notification systems can be used as well to deliver update messages to employees and other publics via phones, text messages, voice messages, and e-mail. Personal e-mails and phone calls can be used too.

Conclusion

Every organization is vulnerable to crises. Used effectively, public relations can prevent a critical situation from resulting in irreparable damage to the business's reputation and goodwill. Therefore, effective communication is an essential part of trying to control any crisis situation. It is the responsibility of the company or organization to provide information about what is happening, the effects it will have a numerous publics, and what the company plans to do to resolve the situation. The questions most asked by the public involved are: What exactly has happened? Why was information about the crisis not released sooner? What could have been done to prevent it from happening? I believe that public relations is backbone of the company because it is the administrative system which cares about the affairs of the company inside and out the company. For instance, when the

companies want to improve mental image, they use administration public relations to help and give them some information. Finally, public relations is not easy to work as many people believe, public relations is system and a big task for a company that wants to succeed.

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