

## WHAT PUBLIC RELATIONS DOES \*

- ▶ Public relations helps our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and institutions. It serves to bring private and public policies into harmony.
- ▶ Public relations serves a wide variety of institutions in society such as businesses, trade unions, government agencies, voluntary associations, foundations, hospitals, schools, colleges, and religious institutions. To achieve their goals, these institutions must develop effective relationships with many different audiences or publics such as employees, members, customers, local communities, shareholders, and other institutions, and with society at large.
- ▶ The managements of institutions need to understand the attitudes and values of their publics in order to achieve institutional goals. The goals themselves are shaped by external environment. The public relations practitioner acts as a counselor to management and as a mediator, helping translate private aims into reasonable, publicly acceptable policy and action.
- ▶ As a management function, public relations encompasses the following:
  - > Anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes, and issues that might impact, for good or ill, the operations and plans of the organization.
  - > Counseling management at all levels in the organization with regard to policy decisions, courses of action, and communications, taking into account their public ramifications and the organization's social or citizenship responsibilities.
  - > Researching, conducting, and evaluating, on a continuing basis, programs of action and communication to achieve the informed public understanding necessary to success of an organization's aims. These may include marketing, financial, fund raising, employee, community or government relations, and other programs.
  - > Planning and implementing the organization's efforts to influence or change public policy.
  - > Setting objectives, planning, budgeting, recruiting and training staff, developing facilities -- in short, managing the resources needed to perform all of the above.
  - > Examples of the knowledge that may be required in the professional practice of public relations include communication arts, psychology, social psychology, sociology, political science, economics, and the principles of management and ethics. Technical knowledge and skills are required for opinion research, public issues analysis, media relations, direct mail, institutional advertising, publications, film/video productions, special events, speeches, and presentations.
- ▶ In helping to define and implement policy, the public relations practitioner uses a variety of professional communications skills and plays an integrative role both within the organization and between the organization and the external environment.

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