

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) IS AN IMPORTANT TOOL OF PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR)

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Abstract - The paper elaborates the various tools of Public Relations used by the corporate houses in day-to-day life. Many companies are recognizing that since they are managing an economic unit in the society, they need to practice Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The paper also reflects that Corporate Social Responsibility is an effective tool of Public Relations. The systematic approach to CSR will result in sustainable development of an area, state or country.

Keywords - Corporate Social Responsibility, Social Responsibility, Public Relations, Sustainable Development

I. INTRODUCTION

Public relations is a well-defined strategic tool of an organization for establishing its long term goodwill with its stakeholders— stockholders, employees, customers, community, supply chain, and the environment. The common practices of PR of are well detailed.

Corporate Social Responsibility has a significant role in the presenting a positive image of a company, industry or enterprise. The company can contribute in developing the place where it is working which in turn also builds a good image of the company before the people.

II. PUBLIC RELATIONS

Keval J. Kumar says that any gesture on the part of an organization which provides image of it to the public and contributes to the evolution of a climate of trust, goodwill and understanding is an instance of Public Relations.

Sam Black in Practical Public Relations emphasizes on a list of things that public relations claim to be and the things it is not.

Public relations practice includes-

- Everything that is calculated to improve mutual understanding between an organization and all with whom it comes into contact, both within and outside the organization.
- Advice on the presentation of the “public image” of an organization.
- Action to discover and eliminate sources of misunderstanding.
- Action to broaden the sphere of influence of an organization by appropriate publicity, advertising, exhibitions, films, etc.
- Public relations is NOT-
- It is not a barrier between the truth and the public.
- It is not propaganda to impose a point of view regardless of truth, ethics and public good.
- It is not publicity aimed directly at achieving sales,

although public relations activities can be very helpful to sales and marketing efforts.

- It is not composed of stunts or gimmicks. These may be useful at times to put over ideas, but fail completely if used often.
- It is not unpaid advertising.
- It is not merely Press relations, although Press work is an important part of most public relations programmes.

Public relations in central and local government is non-political. It is to promote democracy and not to advance the policy of any political party.

III. TOOLS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public Relations (PR) is the creation, distribution and dissemination of messaging and communications for the purpose of promoting and fostering positive awareness, associations, imagery, perception of a person, place or thing among a particular target audience to effect a desired behavior. PR connects a brand and its public via direct messages or editorial media including print, broadcast, radio, digital, video or, social media.

In his book, “Public Relations is your Business”, Colin Coulson-Thomas states that the effectiveness of public relations work can to some extent be measured, but many of its benefits are intangible. Public affairs activity can bolster other forms of communication effort such as advertising, the whole being greater than the sum of the parts. Quality is not always directly related to quantity. Content can be more crucial than column inches.

To improve one’s effectiveness as a communicator it is important to understand the communications process and the sources of error. The crucial factor is often the extent to which one understands the person or group with whom one is communicating.

The effective tools for disseminating Public Relations communications are as follows:

A. Press Release

It is one of the most widely used means of reaching

public through news releases. News stories tend to have better credibility than advertising. It receives greater attention and readership than advertising, provided the subject is of public interest.

B. Press Conferences

The holding of press conference has become an accepted means of issuing information to the Press and it is very effective if used with discretion.

C. Magazine Articles

It is a means to grab attention of readers effectively.

D. Letters to the Editor

This column attracts a regular readership which generally includes local opinion formers. Many opinion-formers daily scan the correspondence columns of the quality dailies.

E. Coverage in Electronic Media

Communicating through this medium is believed to be the most authoritative, influential and exciting medium, reaching very large audience. It is an effective medium due to its ability to combine visual images, sound, motion and colour and achieve viewers' empathy.

F. Local Radio/FM

Independent local radio is a relatively overlooked medium of communication. A phone-in programme can allow direct interaction and feedback. By providing two-minutes tapes, an organization can put across messages to audiences of millions at an extremely low cost.

G. Press Interviews

It features the direct conversation of a spokesperson of an organization/institution with journalists and journalists are not expected to offer their own opinion in news reports.

H. Newspaper and Magazine Advertising

Newspapers and magazines are an important part of one's everyday life and a major source of information for a large number of readers. According to Herbert E. Krugman, newspapers and magazines are high-involvement media, because the reader is generally required to devote some effort in reading the advertising message to have some impact.

I. Outdoor Advertising

Outdoor advertising is one of the permeating communications and it is impossible for anyone living in a civilized society anywhere in this world not to have exposed to it in one form or the other. It includes billboards, hoardings, posters, wall paintings, and transit advertising, etc.

J. Digital PR

Businesses need clearly-defined goals and outcomes

for social media. Evaluating quality and quantity is critical, just as it is with conventional media and measurement must focus on 'conversations' and 'communities'. Implementing a social engagement strategy is now fundamental to a PR campaign. Social media campaigns might focus explicitly on connecting clients directly to consumers or even on building relationships with influencers. But it's not about the numbers; it's about managing reputations online. The emphasis should not be on erasing negative comments or mentions, but to respond quickly and engage. PR practitioners need to listen to conversations and address the issues raised thoroughly and honestly, not react in a knee-jerk manner.

Digital PR extends its wings through following forms:-

- **Social Media Releases**

It is a viral release that is shared in the blogosphere, an extension of newsroom with marketing messages and press releases.

- **Podcasts**

A podcast is a digital medium that consists of an episodic series of audio, video, digital radio, PDF or ePub files subscribed to and downloaded through web syndication or streamed online to a computer device.

- **Blogs**

Blogs are defined as websites which are produced by individuals in a diary format and presented in reverse chronological order. Blogs usually include text, photographs, videos and links to other blogs and web pages (van Heerden, salehi-Sangari, Pitt & Caruana 2009).

- **Polls**

It determines the opportunity to improve products or services and implement the change.

- **Wikipedia**

Wikipedia is the free encyclopedia containing more than 32 million articles in 280 languages, and is the most comprehensive and widely used reference work humans have ever compiled.

- **Direct Mail**

It is a marketing effort that uses a mail service to deliver a promotional printed piece to the target audience.

- **Social Media Marketing**

Social Media marketing starts with the observations of human behavior and interaction within online communities.

- **Social Networking**

The ability to communicate directly with customers and other stakeholders 24x7x365. Social networks have become ubiquitous, and online behaviour is having significant impact on the behaviour of consumers and business.

K. Other Communicative Tools

- **Motion Pictures**

Documentary films are a very powerful medium of

public relations as it is aimed at a specific audience, with intention of imparting information or putting over a particular point of view. Cinema audiences can be reached in two ways; either by advertising films or by general interest films which are shown for entertainment value.

- **Placards, Displays, Exhibits**

The modern exhibitions and trade fairs have become an accepted medium of public relations and trade promotion.

- **Open Houses and Tours**

Visits of journalists, customers, distributors, or opinion-formers are generally organized by public relations staff. Facility visits can be arranged for a variety of purposes such as new plant opening and new product launches. Ideally the visit should relate to an event of some significance. Communication facilities are necessary if a 'news' event is to be covered and reported as it happens.

- **Booklets**

A small book comprising group of pages which gives information about an institute/ organization.

- **Leaflets**

It is a primitive form of communication medium practiced by companies and many institutions to spread a message directly, without mediation, to the individual members of the public.

- **Employee Relations**

Internal public relations is an extremely wide field. It embraces everything- other than pay and working conditions- which encourages employees to make their maximum contributions to productivity and the prosperity of the company. Public relations can contribute to the creation of an atmosphere in which people will work more effectively and willingly and, therefore, produce better goods at lower costs; it can initiate suggestion schemes and safety campaigns; it can lessen waste and carelessness and absenteeism; and perhaps most important at all can enable management to communicate more effectively with employees at all levels. The communicative means for informing employees includes house journals, newsletters, joint consultation techniques and all other media of communication and information.

- **Organized Feedback**

This enables an expert to determine whether a channel of communication is meeting the needs of its company. This can be done through a questionnaire survey by selecting random sample of readers.

- **Conference, Hospitality**

Conferences are usually held to discuss policies or to debate matters of mutual interest, but their value lies as much in the opportunity they provide for people to meet and know one another. For politicians, it is a good platform for establishing mutual understanding.

L. Special Kinds of Public Relations

- **Corporate Social Responsibility**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a means to

achieve sustainable development of an organization. Øyvind Ihlen, Jennifer Bartlett and Steve May (2011) asserts that corporate activities are increasingly scrutinized for their effect on society and the environment. It is unthinkable that a corporation today will declare publicly that its only goal is to make money for its shareholders. Instead, corporations typically claim to balance the needs of society and the environment against the need to make a profit. That is, corporations say that they practice CSR.

As a mode of implementing human rights, labour and environmental standard, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has long been discussed as a possible remedy to the inequalities created and exacerbated by economic liberalization and globalization. It considers that a corporation is not just a self-centred profit-making entity but that the company and its actions are also integral to the economy, society and environment in which they operate (Herrman, 2004).

- **Public Affairs**

Public Affairs is concerned with political and governmental relations and allied matters. However, it should be considered an integral part of the overall public relations function. Because of the "under the table" activity of lobbyists in the past, lobbying has poor reputation for skullduggery and manipulation. In spite of these public affairs is more important today than ever before. It can accomplish more while operating in the public interest than the old-time lobbyist could. It is in the public interest to be sure that people in government know an organization's viewpoint. Business has serious need to present its case. It would not be possible for government to formulate logical plans, laws and regulations without the extensive information that various business and other organizations can supply. In addition it is imperative that organizations be aware of the possible future actions, laws and regulations of government and of what is said in hearings concerning them.

- **Community relations**

Good community relations pays off well as it is important to success in recruiting employees, in maintaining their morale, and in good "corporate citizen". A community relation is a two-way matter. It is desirable for people of the community to know the community. In community relations work is most effectively done through individuals and small groups in person-to-person relationships through community leaders.

- **Contributions**

Contributions should go to the communities in which the donor organization operates, not normally to tax-supported institutions. Contributions should not be made to any cause that investigation indicates is contrary to the best interests of the donor. Capital contributions for buildings and equipment, but not for operating funds, should be made to institutions such as hospitals. It is unwise for publicly owned

businesses to make contributions to religious organizations. Great care should be taken that political contributions always conform to the law and that they are in the public interest. The contributions budget and all contributions of any size should be approved by the board of directors.

IV. CSR & PR

In his entry on Corporate Social Responsibility in the Encyclopedia of Public Relations, Rawlins (2005) proposed that CSR means “doing well by doing good.” That means, for instance, that organizations with high CSR become the employers of choice (an excellent place to work), a neighbor of choice (community where it operates is pleased to have it operating there), and vendor of choice (avoiding bad product design and safety issues—giving full value). The real challenge is for organizations to be accountable beyond financial obligations.

In his book, “The Management of Public Relations”, Robert D. Ross says that while perceiving the environment we must forever look outward to find out what the public thinks rather than inward at the machinations, problems, and viewpoints within the organization. This is of particular importance to public relations management since the purpose of the public relations function is to develop and maintain a social climate or environment in which the organization can prosper best.

Thus the primary duties of public relations management is- (1) to correctly perceive the environment in which the organization now exists and much as possible the environment in which it will exist in the future, (2) to make the proper parts of the organization aware of the environment, and (3) to counsel and help ensure that this information is taken into account in setting objectives, making plans and in running operations.

Caven Masuku and Painos Moyo says that CSR is usually located within the external affairs, corporate affairs and community affairs departments. In other words, it is seen as an adjunct of Public Relations (PR), a function of a company’s external relationships, a peripheral activity, and not something that needs to be embedded across the organization horizontally and vertically. The review of the evolution of PR and CSR by Clark (2000), revealed the existence of four action steps for both PR and CSR as follows: While PR defines the problem, on the other hand, CSR acknowledges the problem. Again while in PR there is planning and programming, in CSR they analyze and plan. Both PR and CSR deal with action and communication. Communication is important, and appears to both CSR and PR, especially when dealing with their stakeholders to maintain mutual relationship and understanding, in order to maximize profit that

benefits all major stakeholders. The forth last important issue to both PR and CSR is that, while PR evaluates the programs, CSR mainly deals with their implementation. The four steps of action of PR and CSR, are the ones which make them to be viewed as the same.

I. CONCLUSION

CSR is an integral element of PR as it bridges the gap for the inclusive growth of the society. One of the strongest CSR roles of public relations is to participate in the social construction of the meaning that defines and evaluates CSR standards by type of organization and during a given era. CSR is thus an integrated, sustainable, and systematic approach to business.

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