

Student name: _____ Date: _____

Define and describe public relations as a career.

Objectives:

- A. Define public relations.
- B. Describe the types of work public relations people do.

MODULE 9D: INFORMATION SHEET

TO THE STUDENT: Read and study the following information sheet and complete the activities at the end.

What is public relations?

Public relations is a communication career. Public relations people work to let people know about their organization's purpose and needs, to listen to what people think about their organization, and to help their organization establish and maintain a good reputation that is based on good performance.

The Public Relations Society of America, one of the world's largest public relations professional associations, defines public relations in the following way:

Public relations helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other.

Four additional definitions are needed to understand this definition:

1. organization
2. public
3. adapt
4. mutually

Definitions

ORGANIZATION: a group of people which has a common purpose, set of goals, and identity, which is supervised by professional leaders or managers.

Examples of “organizations” include corporations, hospitals, not-for-profits, governments and government offices at all levels (country, state, city, etc.), churches, school systems, semi-pro and professional sports teams, special interest groups, unions, trade associations, professional societies, political parties, places of entertainment (like theatres, opera houses, museums), travel destinations (hotels, cruise lines, cities, etc.), etc.

PUBLIC: Informal unorganized groups of people who have an interest in common, like (use examples popular in your school or area, like vegetarians, diabetics, health enthusiasts, voters, etc.)

All organizations have multiple publics that it affects and/or is affected by: The public relations persons in those organizations develop strategies to reach each of those publics in ways that are meaningful to them (the publics).

Some examples of publics with whom public relations professionals work to develop relationships are the media, community, employees, activist groups, government officials, consumers, similar organizations, and political constituents.

ADAPT: to make fit of suitable by changing or adjusting to new or changes circumstances.

All successful organizations adapt to the constantly changing circumstances they face. If they don't, they will—some sooner and some later—find it hard to continue pursuing their mission.

MUTUAL: Webster's defines mutual as reciprocal, then states: reciprocal implies a return in kind or degree by each of two sides of what is given or demonstrated by the other.

An organization must negotiate with other organizations, groups, and individuals in their environment to establish mutual understanding and make that environment one in which they can all exist together.

One of the main purposes of Public Relations is to open the lines of communication between an organization and its publics so that they can talk, listen to, and negotiate with each other. When they do that, they can learn to

understand each other's needs, ideas, and concerns. They learn how they can work together to make life in the same environment (neighborhood, city, country, world, etc.) better for all of them.

Sometimes that means compromising by each side giving up something that is important to them in order to accommodate the other side. Sometimes that means agreeing to disagree, but to understand and respect each other's side. Sometimes that means coming up with something entirely new that neither side had considered before.

For example: You share a room with a sibling who likes music you hate, and vice-versa. You both have to share the same room until one of you is old enough to move. How do you negotiate so you can live together?

LIAISON: Webster defines liaison as "a person whose function it is to make and maintain a connection, as between persons or groups."

Public Relations as a career

Over 100,000 people make a very good living doing public relations work in America alone. It's a career that is growing rapidly in many countries as a result of the major changes in governments and economies since the 1980's, and the opportunities made possible by new technologies like internet and the web.

Public relations is an exciting and varied communication career that you can tailor to your interests and talents.

Public relations people work for all kinds of organizations from hospitals, schools, government, sports teams, theaters, movie stars, television stations corporations, and not-for-profits like the Red Cross, the United Way, and churches--almost any kind of organization you can imagine!

Their job is:

- To let people know about their organization's purposes and needs.
- To listen to what people think about their organization.
- To build good working relationships with groups of people who affect or are affected by their organization.
- To help their organization establish and maintain a good reputation that is based on good performance.

Some public relations professionals are part of the management team that makes major administrative decisions about how the organization will operate, what it will do, how it will treat the people and groups of people who affect or are affected by it, and how it will act in the environment.

Other public relations professionals are technical experts who plan, organize, and produce a wide variety of materials, videos, web sites, publications, special events, meetings, and other activities designed to help them communicate to and develop relationships with a variety of different groups of people, which they call “publics.”

Public Relations People as Liaisons

Public Relations people both represent the organization’s views and opinions, and bring the views and opinions of others into the organization for discussion there. They are called liaisons.

For example: In the 1980’s, McDonald’s used non-biodegradable containers to keep their larger burgers warm from the window to the customer.

Because of what the non-biodegradable containers did to the environment, environmentalist groups asked McDonalds to stop using them. McDonalds didn’t listen to them at first, so the situation became a crisis.

Environmentalists picketed in front of McDonalds and called for a boycott of their food. The media often covered the events. Environmentalists sent letters to the editor and influenced media coverage in other ways as well.

As a result, McDonalds did finally listen and were willing to change their behavior, and the public relations practitioners were involved in that process of listening and responding.

McDonald’s not only stopped using the non-biodegradable containers and adopted new packaging that was biodegradable, but they became strong advocates for environmental issues as well. The environmentalists stopped publicly criticizing and picketing McDonalds, and McDonalds enhanced their reputation by being recognized as a leader in environmental support. They did this without having to compromise the quality (or quantity sold) of their burgers. Public Relations practitioners helped to tell the public about the good things McDonalds was doing.

This was a win-win-win situation: McDonalds won by adapting and gaining recognition in a new area (environmentalism); the environmentalists won by ending McDonald’s use of non-biodegradable containers; and, most importantly, the environment won because there is less non-biodegradable landfill. McDonald’s and environmentalists can co-exist peacefully in America because both sides were willing to compromise: McDonalds by changing their

containers and environmentalists by not complaining about McDonald's use of the new paper. Some environmentalists are opposed to all waste of natural resources, so even the new paper was a compromise for them.

Other examples

Examples of areas in which you will find public relations practitioners:

- Associations (business, trade, industrial, professional, not-for-profit associations)
- Corporations
- Education (Higher Education, School Districts, Private and Public Schools)
- Environmental Organizations
- Food and Beverage Industry
- Health Industry
- Travel & Tourism Industry
- International Organizations
- Public Affairs & Government
- Technology Industry
- Entertainment Industry
- Religious Institutions

4. How many of those ways were through interpersonal interaction (announcement at school or church, friends talking about it, etc.)? Give two examples of interpersonal interactions in which you learned about the event.

a)

b)

MODULE 9D: STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS MODULE

Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Career Education and Work**13.3.11. Career Retention and Advancement**

- C. Evaluate conflict resolution skills as they relate to the workplace.
- Constructive criticism
 - Group dynamics
 - Managing/leadership
 - Mediation
 - Negotiation
 - Problem solving

Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening (RWSL)**1.1.11. Learning to Read Independently**

- E. Establish a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using new words acquired through the study of their relationships to other words. Use a dictionary or related reference.

1.5.11. Quality of Writing

- A. Write with a sharp, distinct focus.
- Identify topic, task and audience.
 - Establish and maintain a single point of view.
- B. Write using well-developed content appropriate for the topic.
- Gather, determine validity and reliability of, analyze and organize information.
 - Employ the most effective format for purpose and audience.
 - Write fully developed paragraphs that have details and information specific to the topic and relevant to the focus.
- F. Edit writing using the conventions of language.
- Spell all words correctly.
 - Use capital letters correctly.
 - Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses, hyphens, brackets, ellipses).

- Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections properly.
- Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).