



UNIT-2

Tools for Public Relations

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

Unit 2

Tools for Public Relations

Communication is a multi-faceted or multi-dimensional discipline. With growing complexities and competition in society, communication professionals have to face the challenges of making their messages reach to their target audiences more sharply-focused and appealing so as to achieve the desired response from them.

In the earlier Unit, you were introduced to the definitions of Public Relations, the use of various terms like "publicity", "public affairs" and "corporate communications". By now you must be familiar with the basics of Public Relations, the various 'publics' and Public Relations values. In this Unit, we shall study some terms like advertising, publicity and propaganda, and their roles in Public Relations. We shall first define each of these terms, followed by an explanation about their relationships.

A brief description of the exact role that advertising, publicity and public relations play in specified situations will help you to understand their similarities and differences. You will also be exposed to the role of advertising and publicity in the media, and the concept of - corporate advertising.

Definitions

Advertising, publicity and public relations are three important aspects of communication. Different in concept, they are similar and interlinked in terms of their basic purpose. Advertising, Publicity and Public Relations are defined differently by academicians and practitioners. The emphasis in the definitions separate them in form from each other, but in practice all these revolve around the well-known communication theory, the diagram of which is given below :

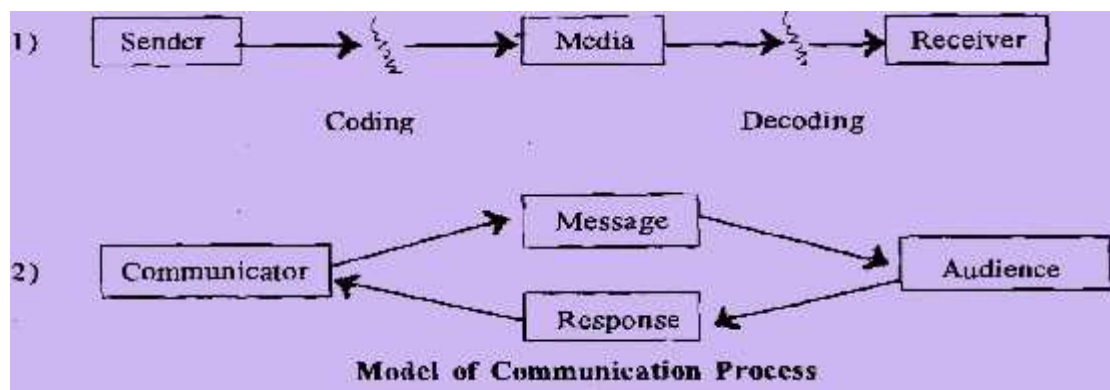


Fig: 2.1

Be it a product, service, an idea, a concept, or an issue; advertising, publicity and public relations inputs add value to it by highlighting its importance to the target groups. They communicate relevant and appropriate information and benefits to the target publics. These terms are associated with public relations but it is not fair because Public Relations is neither publicity, nor propaganda, nor advertising

each of these forms are though part of the Public Relations but has its own limitations. Publicity is concerned with dissemination of information about an organization to attract attention or to publicize products or activities. The objective of publicity is to gain recognition, to build positive image and to win the approval of the target publics. Advertising is buying of space in print, time on AIR, or on billboards, to promote the sales of products, acceptance of ideas, or to earn goodwill. However, Public Relations has a much wider meaning and impact, and is more subtle and persuasive in nature. We will examine each of the three separately in the following paragraphs.

Advertising

A common definition of advertising found in the text books and quoted in professional articles and discussion is as follows:

"Advertising is communicating with and influencing someone, to do something -usually to buy a product or service -and often something to think about?"

The Encyclopedia Britannica defines advertisement as a form of paid announcement intending to promote the sale of commodity or service, to advance an idea or to bring about some other effect, desired by the advertiser.

The American Marketing Association has defined advertisement as 'any paid form of non personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor'. In other words, advertisement is the paid use of any channel of communication-radio, television, Film, press, etc. to identify, explain or to urge the use of adoption or a product, service, or idea.

Advertising is a 'paid form' of communication intended to inform and influence a specific, target group. The reasons for advertising are many and varied. Advertising may be used to:

- Urge and remind people to buy a product or service; or do something or think something
- Announce a new product or service, or an idea / concept
- Announce a modification (price, ingredient, feature, packaging, special offer, etc.)
- Challenge competition (in terms of message or proposition)
- Maintain sales: retrieve lost sales; enter new markets
- Educate the public
- Recruit staff
- Announce a sponsorship

Advertising also helps to build and maintain the 'brand image' of a product or service and adds to its values (as perceived by the customers). It can be divided into two categories:

- a) Product Advertising
- b) Institutional Advertising or Public Relations Advertising.

Product Advertising as the name suggests, is concerned with promoting sales of specified products. Whereas Institutional Advertising is known by various other names also like; 'Corporate Advertising' 'Public Advertising' or 'Prestige Advertising' etc. The main objective of institutional advertising is to create awareness and favourable attitude of particular publics towards the institution as a whole. Although it does not seek to promote sales directly, it does help the sales also indirectly by establishing a good image e.g. by building up a reputation for reliable quality products etc.

Publicity

Publicity, on the other hand, is a free-of-cost write-up, about the product or service, and issue, of an organisation and its activities, which appears in the news columns or editorial columns of a newspaper and magazine, or the non-commercial time on television and radio. This information is generated either by journalists (media) on their own, or on a special request by the company / organisation's spokesman. Publicity messages are not paid for as is advertising. It is a result of significant "news" on the product or service, organisation, or an event concerning the product or organisation itself.

The information being conveyed must be essentially interesting, new, informative and necessary for the readers or viewers of the media.

For the organisations publicity is as essential as advertising. It is a tactical tool, with high degree of credibility, and one that lends itself to natural dramatisation. It is, therefore, used and taken due advantage of by the communicator or organisation behind it for achieving specific and timely communication goals. In the present day high media cost situation, it is a practical tool, and is very often used by Public Relations professionals. Publicity is considered more credible than advertising because media is seen as the source of news. Hence the message has greater acceptability.

Handling publicity requires special skills. If handled well, it offers tremendous benefits, and if handled badly, it can do more damage than good. Besides just well worded the message being conveyed must be factual and truthful. It should not be an 'advertisement', but should be a natural projection of the desired message and information meant for the target group.

Public Relations

Public Relations encompass within it the skills of advertising, publicity, and other techniques of communication which require knowledge of psychology for effective persuasion.

The British Institute of Public Relations (IPR) defines public relations practice as :

"the planned effort to establish and improve the degree of mutual understanding between an organisation, or individual, and any group of persons or organisations, with the primary object of assisting that organisation or individual to deserve, acquire and retain a good reputation".

'Typically the advertiser, or publicity man, usually wants to communicate with and persuade the largest group of potential buyers. He achieves this by "sending messages", generally in one direction (in the form of newspaper ads, television commercials, etc). In contrast, the approach of public relations is much more selective, and it relies on information travelling to and from the publics in both directions i.e. sending messages and getting feedback. Feedback is vital for success of Public Relations.

Differences and Similarities in Public Relations, Advertising and Publicity

To illustrate the practical difference between Advertising, Publicity, and Public Relations, it would be best to take actual example of each of the three inter-linked communication techniques.

The basic differences, as one will see from these examples are;

1. Objectives of the communication,
2. Physical nature/ character of the message evolved, and
3. The end result. i.e.. visibility and effect of the message.

The similarities are in;

- The media channels used, and
- The elements in the creation of the message

To highlight the differences and similarities, we have attempted to look at the examples under the commonly used headings in the teaching of Advertising and Public Relations : "What is to be communicated ?", "To whom?", "Where ?", and "How?".

Advertising

We shall take an example of advertising and analyse shall the various elements in it. A brand of premium toilet soap:

Objectives

- 1) To sell the brand (Liril/Lux/Cinthol) to the target consumers.
- 2) To achieve repeat purchase.
- 3) To achieve specified and targeted sales of the brand and profit for the company,

Message Communication: (What?)

The message in advertising is about the brand (product or service). It creates awareness about the brand, puts across the plus points and special benefits to the user, and helps create brand loyalty. It is based on the consumer's needs and motivation, on the one hand, and competition in the market on the other hand.

Target Group: (TO whom?)

- 1) Women (or families / household) from the higher income groups in urban areas.
- 2) Modern, sophisticated and concerned about their personal hygiene and complexion / skin.
- 3) have purchasing power and want to buy and use products which are superior and of premium quality.

Communication Media: (Where?)

- 1) The press- special women's magazines,' general magazines, newspapers, etc
- 2) The television the national network.
- 3) The cinema – in target markets.
- 4) The radio- Covering target markets.

In other words, this is to be done through the mass media.

Timing of Activity: (When?)

Generally, all the year round, or in strategic bursts the timing also depends on resources available and market situations.

Development of Message: (How?)

The diffusion of the advertising message to any specific area or areas is related to the existing and potential markets for the brand (and product category).This is based on experience or market research. This is also directly linked with the company's sales and market share objectives.

Publicity

Similar to the example of advertising, we shall analyse and example of publicity. Read the items in the below. SELECT Video entering market today

Objectives:

- 1) To announce the special features of the financial issue.
- 2) To generate awareness and response to it.
- 3) To give out details and facts specific to the issue.
- 4) to suggest action needed to be taken by potential investors.
- 5) To build company image.

Message Communication: (What?)

The message in a publicity effort for a Financial issue is basically information on the issue . However, it should be put across in a hard-hitting manner and with supportive facts. It must motivate the potential investors to respond quickly. And this should be as if the press or media) person is suggesting that.

The message must contain fact about the company' History, track record, growth plans, and financial soundness.

1. Potential investors.
2. Present shareholder and investors.
3. Company employee.
4. Government.
5. Media (specially the financial press)
6. Financial analysts.

Communication Media: (How?).

Business news on television is yet another outlet. Publicity about the issue can be done in the business and financial columns newspapers and magazines. Techniques used for achieving publicity include:

- 1) Press relations / hand-outs and press conferences,
- 2) Direct mail shots/ folders,
- 3) Investor conferences,
- 4) Video films,
- 5) Annual reports.

Time of Activity: (When?)

Obviously, the emphasis will be prior to the Issue, and also after the public announcement of the Issue in the respective media.

Prior to the Issue, companies generally run a corporate advertising campaign. If resources do not permit this, the image building is built into the financial Issue announcement ads.

During the Issue, a number of press releases are issued to magazines and newspapers. This is the publicity trust, which we are referring to in this example. And this publicity activity is more than just a one-shot effort, especially when it comes to big issues and big companies.

Development of Message: (Where?)

The publicity effort in terms of the press handouts, press conferences and other means to get the media coverage will depend on the nature (subject) of the issue, i.e., its news-value or news-worthiness. Creativity in communicating the facts will be the essence of its success in getting coverage across the media. This requires talent, and experience. In order to do this successfully, one would need the help of creative people in the AD agencies, or a Public Relations consultancy, or available expertise in the Public Relations Advertising Department within the company.

In the publicity effort, the press (media) relations play a vital role in the effectiveness of a publicity effort. This has to be nurtured over a period of time.

We shall analyse how the Public Relations expertise in a factory may help in solving a crisis (a strike).

Objectives:

1. to resolve differences through communication, and facilitate negotiation between the management and the workers.
2. to bring the strike to an end.

Message Communication: (What?)

The message in such a Public Relations situation is one that builds mutual confidence between the workers and the management. It projects that it is in the interest and benefit of both parties to come together and talk to resolve matters.

The worker's demand and the management's offer / intention must be a focus when developing the message and a meeting point should be kept in sight for the desired results.

One needs to remember that we are dealing with human beings and not machines. This attitude will help greatly in evolving good and effective relations.

Target group: "To Whom?"

- Workers.
- Union leaders.
- Other employees (including the management).
- Outsiders (the customers, the suppliers, the press etc.)

Communication Media: (How?)

- Personal meetings -between the Union leaders and the Management representatives.
- Exchange of letters and facts with regard to the issue
- Notice on notice boards
- House journal
- News sheets, posters and banners
- Video magazines.
- Press releases (if the situation demands communication to the external target groups 4 as well).

Time of Activity: (When?)

In the case of a strike at the factory, the communication exercise must begin as soon as it happens. It must be continued right through the negotiations, and even for the period after the strike is over to retain and maintain the confidence of the concerned parties, other employees, and the external target groups, if any.

The right response at the right time with proper Public Relations is crucial in case of strike, and in the case of any Public Relations activity.

Development of Message: (Where?)

The Public Relations message must match the objectives defined and the media in which it is going to be projected, especially in its tone and voice, words, facts and figures. The Public Relations person has to work in coordination with the labour office, the management and also with the aggrieved worker.

The Public Relations effort has to be a multi-faceted one to make an impact. It must make use of all the media possible in a cohesive and planned manner, because the issue of the strike (as all such Public Relations issues) is very delicate, and can have far-reaching consequences, if not handled well, and even if handled well.

The Public Relations effort, whatever it may be, must be open and honest in every respect and should help to bridge the communication gap among various sections within the organisation and also between the organization and other external publics.

Objectives of Public Relations, Advertising and Publicity

Like all activities, successful advertising and publicity in Public Relations are goal-oriented or activities based on objectives.

The objectives of advertising are twofold;

- i) as a marketing tool
- ii) as a means of persuasion.

As a tool of marketing, advertising is used to sell ideas, products and services of identified sponsor. This is achieved through communication of the product (or service) features, pricing, benefits to the customers, and the image (brand image) among other things. Apart from dissemination of information about products, advertising is also used as a mass persuader whether for creating popularity, whether used in election or in education; advertising seeks to bring about a change in attitude and behaviour. This is why advertising is also defined as "controlled, identifiable information and persuasion by means of mass media. Advertising is thus tailored and executed towards achieving one or more of the objectives, depending on the product or service, the market for it, its customers, and the marketing organization behind it. The execution and its implementation in media to achieve the objectives is a science and an art in itself, requiring special skills.

The **objectives of publicity** are concerned with imparting information, through specific media to the specific target group. The information has to be essentially newsworthy, honest and credible, but made to be more authentic by the nature of the media in which coverage is obtained. The information is put across in such a way that it seems as if it is the media which are giving it out to the readers or viewers, rather than the advertiser or Public Relations man in an organization. To be able to do this successfully requires good knowledge of mass media, its editorial needs and policies, the audience and the operation process. It requires planning, effective writing, and extremely good media relations to ensure that news releases receive favourable consideration.

The **objectives of Public Relations** comprise a subtle combination and publicity. Public Relations is concerned with achieving a shift in knowledge, perception, image and behaviour. Each Public Relations programme, therefore, can have different objectives depending on the situation, the target group (the "publics" it is meant for) and the timing. For instance the objectives of a programme directed to motivate the employees of a company will be different for each internal situation, its timing, the structure and the organization. Similarly, the objectives of Public Relations with the media (i.e., of the media relations) will vary from situation to situation, and company to company. Handling a crisis will demand one type of objective, whereas the launching of a new production unit will demand another type of objective when dealing with the media as a specific "public".

Another difference with regard to Public Relations objectives, when compared with advertising of publicity, is that in Public Relations the target group or the "publics" may often be more than one in a given situation - for instance, the employees, the press, the shareholders, and the government can be the target group in the case of a new project launch, or even a crisis. In advertising and publicity the target group is generally one specific and large group – for instance, the housewives in the case of a consumer product, or the shareholders in the case of a financial crisis, or the government in the case of an industry issue.

Public Relations Advertising in the Press

Now we shall discuss Advertising as a tool of Public Relations. Advertising for Public Relations is more commonly referred to as 'institutional advertising', and this is an important instrument for achieving Public Relations objectives.

Public Relations advertising has been distinguished from the more commonly used product advertising. The later is part of the marketing-mix of the organization. It is intended to further sales of the company's products, either of a single product or a range of products. Institutional advertising seeks to build an image of the organization as a whole, the corporate image. Product advertising may also be sometimes concerned with image building, but that will be to build up a brand image. Institutional advertising does not directly promote sales, or even help to popularize a brand, but by building the corporate image it seeks to create goodwill for the organization for better relations with the publics such as government, the parliament and the press, and thus ultimately helps to improve the company's profitability by creating the climate in which its business operations can proceed in a friendly atmosphere.

Some of the objectives of Public Relations advertising may include:

- a) improving the image of the company among specific publics
- b) to bring about a change in attitude of audience towards the company or its products
- c) to *enhance* the company's image by making known its achievements e.g. increased production targets, export awards etc.
- d) educating the audience on company's various aspects etc. its future plan, prices etc.
- e) establishing the organisation's reputation as a responsible corporate citizen and its concern for the community.
- f) establishing itself as a good company to work for in order to attract more talent.
- g) providing a unified marketing approach for all its products.

In deciding what to highlight in an institutional advertising campaign, one has to consider the public towards which the campaign is mainly directed. Is it the government or the parliament, is it the press, is it the shareholders, the capital market, or the employees of the organization? The answers to these questions should be adopted for the campaign.

As in the case of all advertising, Public Relations advertising should be simple, and the message should be clear. Ideally, only one concept should be put across in one advertisement for the best effect. If more than one idea is to be conveyed, one could plan a series of advertisements tying up together into a total corporate message to the public or the publics concerned. In institutional advertising, one must avoid complex messages and detailed explanation. Instead a brochure or pamphlet or even a book may serve the purpose of Public Relations better depending on the amount of material that has to be incorporated.

However, where it is felt that a series of advertisements will be able to project the message, there should be some kind of inter-connecting link between them, so that the impact of the first is reinforced by each succeeding advertisement in the series.

Institutional advertising, is however, very expensive and the one should use it judiciously.

Public Relations Advertising on the TV

The introduction of sponsored programmes over the various TV channels has provided an opportunity to the public relation practitioners as never before.

Institutional advertising is used for purposes of image building, bringing about changes in attitudes, helping to mould the public opinion and popularising new concepts. As far as the marketers are concerned, the television medium also gives them a powerful tool to develop the brand image and to sell their products and services through 'spots' as well as through sponsored programmes.

The Radio and Public Relations Advertising

Sponsored programmes put across this medium, and, if intelligently produced, can evoke a high interest among listeners. Such programmes can be used for popularising brand products as well as for image building. Entertainment programmes, popular film based programmes and sports programmes command a high listenership and can be effectively used, for Public Relations advertising.

Effective Public Relations, Advertising and Publicity

All communications - big or small in terms of size and effort when used in Advertising, Publicity and Public Relations – involves significant financial and manpower resources. Both are, today, not only scarce, but expensive. Hence advertising, publicity, and Public Relations must be effective to the core. This requires professional planning in the following seven areas:

- 1) Objective Orientation:** All advertising, publicity, and Public Relations programmes must have pre defined and long-term objectives as a pre-requisite. These must be agreed to and accepted by the management.

- 2) **Target group Orientation:** For any campaign (or even single but important activity), the target group to be reached must be clearly identified. There should be no ambiguity or vagueness in this.
- 3) **Message Selection:** the message to be communicated must be linked with and focused upon the objectives to be achieved (awareness, image, announcement, shift in attitude, behaviour etc.) in respect of the target group and the media in which it is going to be transmitted. There must be a perfect match between the two to achieve the desired results.
- 4) **Media selection:** The media to be used must be those which reach the right target group, at the right time, and at the minimum cost.
- 5) **Creativity and Innovations:** This step needs no elaboration as such. The more creative and innovative the professional guidelines'), the better your message will be noticed and the better will be the chance of your being able to achieve your goals.
- 6) **Adequate Resources:** one of the biggest shortcomings in advertising and Public Relations is that companies tend to economise on the financial outlay? This often results in unsustained or irregular communications. To be effective, and to make the desired impact, advertising, publicity and Public Relation programmes must be sustained and backed with adequate financial resources in creating the message as well as sending it out through the media.
- 7) **Manpower Back-up** Whatever needs and financial resources, the professional manpower support in advertisement and public relations is most essential for the planning and execution of the professional campaigns.

There is a dire need for professionally trained and effective people in all the three communication fields. Training and development, therefore, is an essential requirement at most organisations.

Publication

A 'public' is a group of people with similar interests, who have a common opinion on a controversial subject. Kuppaswamy defines public as "a spontaneous collection of people in response to a certain kind of situation." To clarify the concept to you further, it is issue /controversy that holds the public together. You must however note that the members of the 'public' are heterogeneous and are not one composite group. Public is not limited by size or enclosed within some geographical boundaries.

Let us now examine what the term 'opinion':

Opinion, according to Webster's seventh new colligate Dictionary, is "a view, judgement, or appraisal formed in the mind about a particular matter". An opinion is stronger than an impression and weaker than positive knowledge. It implies a conclusion throughout yet is opened to disputes. We will now take a look at the concept called public opinion.

Definition of Public Opinion

Public Opinion is all expression of a belief held in common by members of a group of public on a controversial issue of general importance.

Public opinion is usually expressed after controversy, dispute and debate over some controversial question that concerns the welfare, doctrines, and value system of a group. Public opinion is aroused whenever a contemporary issue or question of some concern arises about which the member of the group are likely to have disagreement.

The opinion must be representative of the group as a whole. Thus, public opinion is the complex of beliefs expressed by a significant number of persons on an issue of general importance.

Opinion Formation

The basic objective of public relations is to measure, analyse, and influence public opinion which develops from the attitudes of individuals comprising the public. Therefore, it is important to understand the meaning of attitudes, why people hold the attitudes they do, and their role in the opinion-forming process.

Attitudes are the feelings or moods of a person for or against some person, organisation, issue, or object. They represent the predisposition of an individual to evaluate controversial questions in a favourable or unfavourable manner. Simply stated, an attitude is a way of looking at situations. An expressed attitude is an opinion.

Change in attitude may occur under various conditions e.g. the existing attitude no longer provides us the satisfaction or if our aspirations get raised. Changes in attitude can be brought about through communications by creating new beliefs or by appealing to the emotions to arouse favourable or unfavourable attitudes. Appeals to the physical, social and economic needs of people are considered to be effective in changing their attitude e.g. the ads for insuring life, property etc., have considerable acceptance and response by general public.

How is Public Opinion Formed?

Attitudes and their expression in the form of opinions are the psychological phenomena of an individual. A group is not capable of forming an opinion.

Public opinion is formed by individuals composing a group, who express their own opinion on a controversial issue. Public opinion is a composite opinion resulting from the interaction of the individual opinions of the members of a group.

Public opinion involves a transformation of individual opinion into group opinion, brought about by the influence exerted by the members of a group on an individual's opinion. The opinions of people in a group are influenced by opinions of leaders, other members of the group, or persons outside the group; what they read in newspapers, magazines, and books, what they see in life about them or on television.

Apart from group pressures, individual opinions are influenced by their needs, emotions, experience, heredity, culture, economic status and education. Out of the interaction of individual attitudes, opinions, and the opinions of the group emerges public opinion.

Propaganda, Public Opinion and Public Relations

You have just learnt how public opinion is formed and how Public Relations efforts can help in moulding it. There is, however, another aspect to moulding of public opinion based on propaganda. It is important for Public Relations students to learn to distinguish Public Relations from propaganda and not to confuse the two, as they operate at different levels and have different motives.

Public Relations is not propaganda. Propaganda is defined as an expression of opinion by individual that is deliberately designed to influence opinion or action by other individuals or groups with reference to pre-determined end. Although in its broadest sense, propaganda intends to advance a cause e.g. a religious faith, and hence can be considered as legitimate persuasion, it has come to acquire a negative image because it has been used to unleash hatred and fear during wars. It is still being used by suppressing facts. Propaganda has therefore gained notoriety as brainwashing and barbarity. It is characterised by the one or more of the following :

- use of words with double meanings
- appeals to prejudices of people and arousal of negative emotions like fear, hatred etc.
- evasion of truth, suppression of facts, distortion
- provocation, playing up trivia
- presentation of only one sided arguments
- repetition

Critics of Public Relations sometimes refer to it as propaganda to imply that this also manipulates public opinion. However, even though Public Relations attempts to influence public opinion, it is vastly different from propaganda. Public Relations is an honest, straight forward, long term effort to create favourable image based on facts and performance. It has no malicious, short term selfish gains to make by suppressing fact to mislead people. Unlike propaganda, it is based on an open two-way communication.

Public Opinion Research in Communication and Public Relations

Public Relations research serves these three functions:

- 1) Most frequently, it may simply confirm assumptions about the state of public opinion on an issue, or a company.
- 2) A second role of research is to clarify questions on which limited information is available, or on which apparently contradictory data are to be found. Research can help sort out what people really mean and when they like or dislike in an organisation, the reasons they cite for these feelings, and even the origin of the feelings.

- 3) Research re-orientes our thinking and conceptualisation on Public Relations & public opinion problems. It helps us to define and focus on our objectives and target group, and in assigning priorities to Public Relations problems and Public Relations actions.

There are many research techniques available for conducting Public Relations and public opinion research. A very old and still useful method is to carry a content analysis of how an issue or a problem is treated in the press, published data, and the like. Such desk research gives a pretty fair measure of the condition of the problem and often useful hints as to which aspects of it seem to be arousing the greatest public interest.

Managing Effectiveness

The secret of managing effectiveness lies in "how to do it", or the methodology of doing things. Success in communication results out of managing four important steps:

- 1) Right selection
- 2) Right motivation
- 3) Right evaluation
- 4) Training and development.

Selecting the right message, the right target group, and the right media is the first step. Motivating your target group to perceive and then act as you want them to; is the next. Having done that, evaluating what has been achieved, what has not been achieved, and what needs to be done further is vital. This may be part of the programme undertaken, but must be planned beforehand. Feedback in communication is crucial -there should be one-way communication if there is no feedback.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *PR 2.0: New Media, New Tools, New Audiences, (2008), [By Deirdre K. Breakenridge*
- ✓ *Public Relations: Critical Debates and Contemporary Practice, (2006), edited by Jacquie L'Etang*
- ✓