CHAPTER 2

The History of Public Relations

OUTLINE

PREVIEW

Newspapers have carried advertising since the days of the American Revolution. Benjamin Franklin, who was also a writer and an editor, published the most widely read newspaper in the American colonies. His *Pennsylvania Gazette* carried advertising for such everyday items as soap, books, and stationery. Franklin even wrote some of his own ads, one of which praises the superior features of the pot-bellied stove he invented.

People with a message to communicate have long recognized the power of public opinion to move others to action. That's why public opinion is one of the three factors responsible for the growth of public relations as a communications medium. The other two are competition among the many institutions that rely on public support and the development of media through which these organizations can reach the public. These three factors have motivated the evolution of public relations through four different traditions:

- The rhetorician and press agent tradition
- The journalistic and publicity tradition
- The persuasive communication campaign tradition
- The relationship-building and two-way communication tradition

As we look at each of these traditions throughout the chapter, you'll see that like many historical trends, they overlap somewhat. Each has been a product of the larger economic, political, social, and cultural forces of the time, as well as of the growth of mass media and specialized communications channels. We can think of them as a historical continuum of the strategic uses of communication by business organizations, social movements, not-for-profit groups, government agencies, and community groups.

But it is the lessons we learn from history that make its study important for us. In public relations we have the benefit of important principles developed and employed by many 20th-century practitioners. Ivy Lee teaches us that we must take positive action in order to have something worth communicating. Harold Burson, who built the largest public relations agency in the world, stresses a business culture of "caring and sharing," or "prize the individual and celebrate the team." Edward Bernays teaches us the importance of applying social science techniques to influence behavior.

This chapter presents the many individuals and social movements that have shaped our practice of public relations today. Learn the principles they developed, and be creative in applying them to the public relations discipline of the future.

RHETORICIAN AND PRESS AGENT TRADITION

The forerunner to modern-day public relations practice can be found in the work of **rhetoricians, press agents,** and other promoters. Since early times speechmakers, called rhetoricians, provided such communication services as speech-writing, speaking on clients' behalf, training for difficult questions, and persuasion skills.

For example, by Plato's day, ca. 427 to 347 BC, rhetoric as a distinct discipline was well established in Greece. The foremost rhetorician was Gorgias of Leontinium in Sicily (ca. 483–375 BC) who believed that the rhetorician's job was to foster persuasive skills more than it was to determine if arguments and claims were true or false, according to Helio Fred Garcia.[1] Garcia also noted that even in classical Athens, public opinion determined matters both large and small, from important public works projects such as building city walls to the appointment of generals and other high officeholders to settling matters of criminal justice.[2]

Persuasive skills have been used to influence the public and public opinion for hundreds of years. Artifacts of what can be construed as public relations materials survive from ancient India, Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome. The Crusades, the exploits of Lady Godiva, the actions of Martin Luther, and the adventures of the conquistadores seeking El Dorado have all been explained as examples of ancient public relations activities. The creation in the 17th century of the Congregatio de Propaganda (the congregation for propagating the faith) by the Roman Catholic Church is often pointed to as a keystone in the development of public relations. The action brought us the term *propaganda* but was not a significant development in a church that exists to propagate the faith.

American Antecedents to Public Relations

Numerous examples of public relations–like activities were identifiable in the early days of American settlement as each of the colonies used publicity techniques to attract settlers. In 1641, Harvard College initiated the first systematic U.S. fund-raising campaign, which was supported by the first fund-raising brochure, *New England's First Fruits.*

Boston Tea Party staged by Samuel Adams.

In 1758, King's College (now Columbia University) issued the first press release—to announce graduation exercises.

Publicity techniques were even more prevalent at the time of the American Revolution and all subsequent conflicts or situations when power has been threatened or when public support is needed. Indeed, public relations has prospered most in times of extreme pressure or crisis. Such were the circumstances preceding the American Revolutionary War, when Samuel Adams initiated what can be called a public relations campaign. Adams was to the communication dimension of the Revolutionary War what George Washington was to the military dimension. Adams recognized the value of using symbols like the Liberty Tree that were easily identifiable and aroused emotions.

Adams also used slogans that are still remembered, like "taxation without representation is tyranny." Because he got his side of the story to a receptive public first, shots fired into a group of rowdies became known as "the Boston Massacre." Adams directed a sustained-saturation public relations campaign using all available media. He staged the Boston Tea Party to influence public opinion. In the Sons of Liberty and Committees of Correspondence, he provided the organizational structure to implement the actions made possible by his public relations campaign.[3]

Public Relations in a Young Nation

In the infancy of the United States, public relations was practiced primarily in the political sphere. The publication and dissemination of the Federalist Papers, which led to the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, has been called "history's finest public relations job."[4]

Early in his presidency, Andrew Jackson appointed Amos Kendall, a member of the famous Kitchen Cabinet, to serve as the candidate's pollster, counselor, ghostwriter, and publicist. Although he did not hold the title, Kendall effectively served as the first presidential press secretary and congressional liaison. Jackson, who could not express himself very well, used Kendall as a specialist to convey his ideas to Congress and the

American people through the newspapers of the day. Newspapers, for the first time, were beginning to reach a rising middle class as a result of urbanization and advances in public education and literacy rates. Still, communication was primarily face-to-face because the majority of Americans lived on farms or in small communities.

Publicity drove the settlement of the American western frontier, the biggest issue of the time. From Daniel Boone to Davy Crockett to Buffalo Bill, skillful and sometimes exaggerated promotion was the way to move easterners to the west. Even Jesse James got into the act when he issued a news release about one of his particularly daring train robberies. Business leaders, too, became aware of publicity's virtues. When Burlington Railroad initiated its 1858 publicity campaign, Charles Russell Lowell stated, "We must blow as loud a trumpet as the merits of our position warrants."[5]

P. T. Barnum and Press Agentry

Phineas T. Barnum has always been considered the master of press agentry, a promoter with endless imagination. Barnum promoted the midget General Tom Thumb; Jenny Lind, the "Swedish Nightingale"; Jumbo, the elephant; and Joice Heath, a 161-year-old woman (it was claimed, although an autopsy report after her death put her age at 70–80). Barnum used publicity to make money, pure and simple.

When P. T. Barnum died, the *London Times* fondly called him a "harmless deceiver." As long as press agentry is used to promote circuses, entertainment, and professional sports, its negative potential is limited. Its use in business and politics, however, is more threatening.

The Downside of Press Agentry

In the quest to gain media and public attention, press agentry can become increasingly outrageous, exploitive, and manipulative. Moreover, the manipulative attempt to gain the attention of the public through the media has an even darker side.

In 1878, French sociologist Paul Brousse described what he called the **"propaganda of the deed."** The term refers to a provocative act committed to draw attention toward an idea or grievance in order to get publicity. For European anarchists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, propaganda of the deed meant bombing, murder, and assassination. European sociologists feared that press agents and rhetoricians could incite mob rule, thereby making governments and societies less stable. This is the same tactic used by terrorist organizations through attacks such as the 9/11 suicide flights into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Terrorists try to use their attacks to draw attention to their propaganda.

JOURNALISTIC AND PUBLICITY TRADITION

Societal conditions surrounding the 19th-century American Industrial Revolution paved the way for a new dominant model of public relations practice. The Industrial Revolution hit America with full force during the last quarter of the 19th century. The nation's population doubled as immigrants rushed to the land of opportunity. New products and new patterns of life rapidly emerged. The enforced rhythm of the factory, the stress of urban life, and the vast distinction between the bosses and the workers were new and not always pleasant realities of American life. In fact, social harmony was generally breaking down as evidenced by rising conflict and confrontation.

Businesses were racking up enormous profits but were losing public support in the process. Workers began to organize themselves into unions, and they perceived their interests in many cases as directly opposed to those of business owners. Business was at once highly successful and increasingly besieged. Historian Merle Curti wrote that corporations gradually began to realize the importance of combating hostility and to court public favor. The expert in the field of public relations was an inevitable phenomenon in view of the need for the services he or she could provide.[6]

In short, industrialization altered the structure of society and gave rise to conditions requiring public relations expertise. By the early 1900s, business was forced to submit to more and more governmental regulations and encountered increasingly hostile criticism from the press. Corporations recognized that deception, manipulation, and self-serving half-truths were inappropriate responses to challenges raised by media and government. As a result, public relations became a specialized function broadly accepted in major corporations in order to counter hostility by courting public support.

Not surprisingly, the term *public relations* came into use at this time; its earliest appearance was probably in Dorman B. Eaton's 1882 address to the graduating class of the Yale Law School. The concept, as noted, was not new, but the coining of the term suggested a new level of importance and consciousness. As historian Marc Bloch has commented, "The advent of a name is a great event even when the object named is not new, for the act of naming signifies conscious awareness."[7]

Early Public Relations Consultants

Former journalists began to find it possible to make a living in the public relations business. In 1900, George V. S. Michaelis established the Publicity Bureau in Boston. His job, as he saw it, was to gather factual information about his clients for distribution to newspapers. By 1906, his major clients were the nation's railroads. The railroads engaged the Publicity Bureau to head off adverse regulations being promoted by Theodore Roosevelt. The agency used fact-finding publicity and personal contact to push its clients' position, but it kept secret its connection with the railroad. The Publicity Bureau staff increased dramatically, with offices set up in New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., St. Louis, and Topeka and with agents in California, South Dakota, and elsewhere.

President Theodore Roosevelt, who saw the presidency as "a bully pulpit," proved to be more than a match for the Publicity Bureau. The first president to make extensive use of press conferences and interviews, Roosevelt was said to rule the country from the newspapers' front pages. The passage of the Hepburn Act extended government control over the railroad industry and represented a clear victory for the Roosevelt administration.

The father of public relations and the man most credited with nurturing the fledgling public relations profession was Ivy Ledbetter Lee, son of a Georgia preacher. Lee was a reporter who, early on, saw better prospects in the publicity arena. After working in New York's 1903 mayoral campaign and for the Democratic National Committee, Lee joined George Parker, another newspaper veteran, to form the nation's third publicity agency in 1904.

Two years later, coal operators George F. Baer and Associates hired the partnership to represent their interests during a strike in the anthracite mines. John Mitchell, leader of the labor forces, was quite open and conversant with the press, which treated him and his cause with considerable sympathy. The tight-lipped Baer would not even talk to the president of the United States.

Lee took the assignment and persuaded Baer to open up. Then he promptly issued a Declaration of Principles to all newspaper city editors. The sentiments expressed in this document clearly indicated that public relations had entered its second stage.

As Eric Goldman observed, "The public was no longer to be ignored, in the traditional manner of business, nor fooled, in the continuing manner of the press agent."[8] Lee declared that the public was to be informed:

> This is not a secret press bureau. All our work is done in the open. We aim to supply news. This is not an advertising agency; if you think any of our matter ought properly to go to your business office, do not use it. Our matter is accurate. Further details on any subject treated will be supplied promptly, and any editor will be assisted most cheerfully in verifying directly any statement of fact. . . . In brief, our plan is, frankly and openly, on behalf of business concerns and public institutions, to supply to the press and public of the United States prompt and accurate information concerning subjects which it is of value and interest to the public to know about.[9]

In short, then, Lee's idea was to tell the truth about his client organizations' actions. He believed that if telling the truth damaged the organization, the organization should correct the problem so that the truth could be told without fear. That said, Lee's railroad clients did not react well to this treatise. Public relations historian Ray Hiebert wrote, "Many an old-timer with the railroad was dismayed when, almost immediately, Lee began revolutionizing things, putting into effect his theories about absolute frankness with the press."[10]

Lee's publicity arsenal was not limited to news releases. In helping stave off railroad freight regulations, Lee published leaflets, folders, and bulletins for customers; company news for employees; and other material for important decision makers, including congressmen, state legislators, mayors and city councilmen, economists, bankers, college presidents, writers, and clergymen.[11]

Lee realized that a corporation could not hope to influence the public unless its publicity was supported by good works. Performance determines publicity. To achieve necessary and positive consistency between words and actions, Lee urged his clients in business and industry to align their senses and their policies with the public interest. The public, Lee thought, was made up of rational human beings who, if they are given complete and accurate information, would make the right decisions. As a result, he said that his job was interpreting the Pennsylvania Railroad to the public and interpreting the public to the Pennsylvania Railroad. In short, Lee saw himself as a mediator bridging the concerns of business and the public's interests.

Then, in 1914, Lee was hired to remake the image of John D. Rockefeller, the owner of Standard Oil of New Jersey. Nine thousand coal miners went on strike in southern Colorado in September 1913. The Rockefellers were the principal stockholders in the largest company involved, the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. In April 1914, an accidental shot resulted in a battle in which several miners, two women, and 11 children were killed. The Rockefellers were blamed, and their name was damaged. Lee advised the younger Rockefeller to practice a policy of openness. After the strike, Lee advised Rockefeller to visit the mining camps to observe conditions firsthand.

Lee died in disgrace, the victim of his own public relations policies. In the early 1930s, Lee advised the Interessen Gemeinschaft Farben Industrie, more commonly known as I. G. Farben, or the German Dye Trust. Eventually the Nazis took over, and the company asked Lee for advice on how to improve German–American relations. He told the company to be open and honest. Shortly before his death, Lee's connections with the Germans were investigated by the House Special Committee on Un-American

Activities. Headlines screamed "Lee Exposed as Hitler Press Agent," and his name was blackened throughout the United States.

Other early publicity offices were established by William Wolf Smith in Washington, D.C., in 1902; Hamilton Wright, San Francisco, 1908; Pendleton Dudley, New York's Wall Street district, 1909; Rex Harlow, Oklahoma City, 1912; and Fred Lewis and William Seabrook, Atlanta, 1912.

Not-for-Profit Organizations and Social Movements

Not-for-profit organizations, including colleges, churches, charitable causes, and health and welfare agencies, began to use publicity extensively in the early 20th century. In 1899, Anson Phelps Stokes converted Yale University's Office of the Secretary into an effective alumni and public relations office. Harvard president Charles W. Eliot, who spoke as early as 1869 on the need to influence public opinion toward advancement of learning, was among the Publicity Bureau's first clients in 1900. The University of Pennsylvania and the University of Wisconsin set up publicity bureaus in 1904. By 1917, the Association of American College News Bureaus was formed.

In 1905, the Washington, D.C., YMCA sought $350,000 for a new building. For the first time, a full-time publicist was engaged in a fund-raising drive. By 1908, the Red Cross and the National Tuberculosis Association were making extensive use of publicity agents. The New York Orphan Asylum was paying a publicity man $75 per month.

Churches and church groups were quick to recognize the value of an organized publicity effort. New York City's Trinity Episcopal Church was one of Pendleton Dudley's first clients in 1909. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church established its publicity office in 1912. George Parker, Ivy Lee's old partner, was appointed to handle publicity for the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1913.

Though largely neglected in histories of public relations, the social movements of the day adopted the same public relations techniques that were used by other not-for-profit organizations, according to public relations scholar Karen Miller. Moreover, she notes that public relations texts give virtually no attention to the women who headed such movements, including Clara Barton, Margaret Sanger, Susan B. Anthony, Ida B. Wells, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Each of these women used public relations techniques of the day most effectively to inform the public about controversial issues despite the fact that their work is generally considered to be outside the business frame of the field.[12]

Early Corporate Communications Departments

As early as 1883, AT&T leader Theodore Vail expressed concern about the company's relationship with the public and the public's conflicts with the company. He built support from the middle class for AT&T programs by implementing cut-rate phone bills, friendly greetings from the telephone operator, employee morale programs, and paid advertising. In 1907, he hired James Drummond Ellsworth for AT&T's public relations. Ellsworth promoted efficient operation and consideration of customers' needs, a systematic method for answering complaints, and acceptance of governmental regulation as the price for operating a privately owned natural monopoly.

By 1888, the Mutual Life Insurance Company employed Charles J. Smith to manage a "species of literary bureau." A year later, George Westinghouse, head of Westinghouse Electric, established the first corporate communications department. Samuel Insull, an associate of George Westinghouse, rose to head the Chicago Edison Company, an electric utility. In 1903, he began to publish *The Electric City,* a magazine aimed at gaining the

understanding and goodwill of the community. He pioneered films for public relations purposes in 1909, and in 1912 he introduced bill stuffers, messages to customers in their monthly statements.

Among the greatest of industrial publicity users was Henry Ford. The Ford Company pioneered use of several public relations tools. The employee periodical *Ford Times* was begun in 1908 and continues today. In 1914, a corporate film department was established. Ford also surveyed 1,000 customers to gain insights into their attitudes and concerns.

Astute corporate communicators began recognizing that well-informed employees could serve as ambassadors of corporate goodwill. In fact, George Michaelis, who had founded the Publicity Bureau in Boston, advised George Westinghouse in 1914 to pay more attention to internal "human relations." Thus, employees became recognized as a significant public and an appropriately important audience for public relations efforts. By 1925, more than half of all manufacturing companies were publishing employee magazines.

Early Government Public Relations

The greatest public relations effort in history, up to its time, was the one mounted in support of the U.S. effort in World War I. The military had utilized publicity for several years; the Marine Corps established a publicity bureau in Chicago in 1907. Never before had such a massive, multifaceted, coordinated program been mounted. Moreover, though often used by big business in a defensive fashion, public relations took the offensive when it came to war.

THE PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN TRADITION

In many respects, the beginnings of the persuasive campaign tradition are embedded in the U.S. World War I publicity and propaganda program.

The Creel Committee

Woodrow Wilson set up a Committee on Public Information in 1917, and newspaperman George Creel was asked to run it. With a staff of journalists, scholars, artists, and others skilled at manipulating words and symbols, Creel mobilized the home front with a comprehensive propaganda bureau that utilized all media, including film and photography.

Creel did not just work out of a central office; he decentralized the organization and the effort. Every industry had a special group of publicity workers tending to their particular contributions to the war effort. Political scientist Harold D. Lasswell was involved in the Creel organization. Looking back to assess the situation, Lasswell concluded, "Propaganda is one of the most powerful instrumentalities in the modern world."[13]

Although the methods used by Creel's committee were fairly standard tools of the public information model, the Creel committee achieved great success because it made use, without knowing it, of psychological principles of mass persuasion. Committee members constructed messages that appealed to what people believed and wanted to hear. Clearly, the Creel committee demonstrated the power of mass persuasion and social influence at a national level.

The success prompted thoughtful Americans to give more concerted attention to the nature of public opinion and the role of the public in society. Educational philosopher John Dewey and his supporters believed that wartime propaganda and postwar

societal focus on business development signaled that the citizenry was losing interest in civic life. In contrast, well-spoken political commentator Walter Lippmann professed that American society had grown too complex for the average citizen to understand. The government, he thought, should be influenced and run by experts who could interpret the public will in light of national needs and concerns. The Lippmann interpretation prompted professional persuaders like Edward Bernays to emphasize that the function of public relations was to change images and influence public perception of issues.

Given the pro-business attitudes of the 1920s and 1930s, it's little wonder that Lippmann's ideas swamped Dewey's. Critical scholar Margaret Duffy notes that Lippmann's ideas were "grafted" by Edward Bernays, the focal practitioner of the persuasive communication campaign tradition.[14]

Edward Bernays

The leading proponent of persuasion was clearly Edward Bernays, the nephew of psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. Bernays grew up with dinner-table social science discussions prior to joining Creel's public information committee. After World War I he became a science writer and then a theater promoter, where he combined his journalistic and persuasion interests.

Bernays understood that publics could be persuaded if the message supported their values and interests. In many ways, the thrust of his philosophy is made clear in his first book, *Crystallizing Public Opinion.* At the time, he saw public relations as being more or less synonymous with propaganda, which he defined as "the conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses."[15]

Throughout his career Bernays described public relations as the science of creating circumstances, mounting events that are calculated to stand out as newsworthy, yet at the same time do not appear to be staged. Staged "media events" were clearly a defining characteristic of the agency that Bernays started in 1919 with Doris Fleischman, his future wife and partner. Bernays's most well-known event was "Lights Golden Jubilee." Underwritten in 1929 by General Electric and the National Electric Light Association, the jubilee media event recognized the 50-year anniversary of Thomas Edison's invention of the electric lightbulb. Bernays cast the celebration as a premier testimony to the genius of American business and entrepreneurial spirit. It was staged as a massive display of lighting in Dearborn, Michigan, and at other locations around the world. Prior to the event Bernays orchestrated tremendous press coverage and magazine features, salutatory proclamations and endorsements from mayors, governors, and other statesmen throughout the United States and western Europe. The real newsworthiness, however, came on the day of the event when the assembled dignitaries on the Dearborn platform included President Herbert Hoover, J. P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller Jr., Orville Wright, Madame Curie, and *The New York Times* publisher Adolph Ochs.

RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING AND TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION TRADITION

While Bernays was championing the persuasive campaign approach to public relations, a very different perspective was being set forth by Arthur Page, a successful businessman, public servant, writer, and editor.

Arthur Page

Arthur Page was approached with an offer to become vice president of AT&T, succeeding the pioneer public relations specialist James D. Ellsworth. Page agreed to accept the

position only on the condition that he would not be restricted to publicity in the traditional sense. He demanded and received a voice in company policy and insisted that the company's performance be the determinant of its public reputation. Page maintained that all business in a democratic country begins with public permission and exists by public approval. If that be true, it follows that business should be cheerfully willing to tell the public what its policies are, what it is doing, and what it hopes to do. This seems practically a duty.[16]

Page viewed public relations as a broad-based management function that transcended both the journalistic publicity and persuasive communication campaign traditions. Under Page's leadership, however, the company recognized that winning public confidence required not merely ad hoc attempts to answer criticism. Rather, a continuous and planned program of positive public relations using institutional advertising, the usual stream of information flowing through press releases, and other methods were needed. Bypassing the conventional print media, the company went directly to the public, establishing, for instance, a film program to be shown to schools and civic groups.

AT&T sought to maintain direct contact with as many of its clients as possible. The company made a total commitment to customer service. Moreover, money was deposited into a number of different banks, legal business was given to attorneys throughout the country, and contracts for supplies and insurance were made with many local agencies. AT&T paid fees for employees to join outside organizations, knowing that through their presence the company would be constantly represented in many forums. Finally, the company sought to have as many people as possible own its stock. Today, AT&T and the successor companies that were created by divestiture in 1984 are the most widely held of all securities.

What truly set Page apart and established him as a pioneer was his insistence that the publicity department act as an interpreter of the public to the company, drawing on a systematic and accurate diagnosis of public opinion. Page wanted data, not hunches. Under his direction, the AT&T publicity department (as it was still called) kept close check on company policies, assessing their impact on the public. Thus, Page caused the company "to act all the time from the public point of view, even when that seems in conflict with the operating point of view."[17]

Page insisted that his staff practice six principles of public relations:

1. *Tell the Truth.* Let the public know what's happening and provide an accurate picture of the company's character, ideals, and practices.
2. *Prove It with Action.* Public perception of an organization is determined 90 percent by doing and 10 percent by talking.
3. *Listen to the Customer.* To serve the company well, understand what the public wants and needs. Keep top decision makers and other employees informed about company products, policies, and practices.
4. *Manage for Tomorrow.* Anticipate public relations and eliminate practices that create difficulties. Generate goodwill.
5. *Conduct Public Relations as if the Whole Company Depends on It.* Corporate relations is a management function. No corporate strategy should be implemented without considering its impact on the public. The public relations professional is a policymaker capable of handling a wide range of corporate communications activities.
6. *Remain Calm, Patient, and Good-Humored.* Lay the groundwork for public relations miracles with consistent, calm, and reasoned attention to information and contacts. When a crisis arises, remember that cool heads communicate best.

Public relations historian Karen Miller Russell believes that Page may come closest among early practitioners of representing the sense of the relationship-building and two-way communication tradition. This shows up, says Russell, in Page's continual quest for government-industry accommodation. He led the effort with Columbia University social scientist Paul Lazarsfeld to conduct regularly scheduled research with customers, employees, and other key publics to assess AT&T's standing among those groups. In turn, he used that feedback both to encourage organizational change and to fine-tune messages regarding the company's identity. (See spotlight 2.1 for a brief biographical sketch of leading public relations pioneers.)

The Depression and World War II

Although corporate and agency public relations practice grew handily as part of the 1920s business boom, it was the Great Depression of the 1930s and the personal leadership of President Franklin Roosevelt that further transformed the practice. With help from public relations practitioners like Carl Byoir, Roosevelt built public support and changed public opinion toward his New Deal recovery programs with weekly radio broadcasts and numerous other techniques, including those described in mini-case 2.1 featuring counselor Carl Byoir.

Roosevelt's presidency was highlighted by both the Great Depression and World War II. In June 1942, with America fully engaged in worldwide war, the Office of War Information (OWI) was established. Similar to Creel's effort in World War I, a massive public relations effort was mounted to rally the home front. Elmer Davis directed the program. The goals of the OWI included selling war bonds; rationing food, clothing, and gasoline; planting victory gardens; and recruiting military personnel. Other issues promoted were factory productivity and efficiency.

Post–World War II

The period following World War II represented a high point in professional growth and development of public relations practice. Many leading practitioners from the 1950s to the 1980s were among the nearly 75,000 Americans who had the "ultimate public relations internship," learning public relations practice during wartime while working for the OWI.

Several important communication agencies still active today trace their beginnings to the OWI. These include the Voice of America, the American Advertising Council, and the United States Information Agency, which sponsors scholarly and cultural exchanges. Many OWI veterans applied their wartime skills to initiate public information and public relations programs for government agencies, nonprofit organizations, schools, colleges, and hospitals. Moss Kendrix, a pioneer African American public relations practitioner, was one of those whose career path was launched while working with the Treasury Department promoting war bonds.[18]

And yet the hallmark of postwar public relations growth took place in the private sector, in corporations and agencies. A consumer economy made use of both public relations and advertising to market products. Agencies came into full being, providing media relations and media contact capabilities not always available on the corporate side. The need for these skills was driven in part by the explosive growth of media outlets not available before the war—including FM radio, general magazines, suburban community newspapers, and trade and professional association publications. Their services expanded from a base of counseling and media relations to include public affairs or government relations, financial and investor relations, crisis communication, and media relations training for executives.

Spotlight 2.1 Public Relations Pioneers

P. T. Barnum. A consummate showman during the middle and late 1800s, Barnum originated many methods for attracting public attention. He didn't let truth interfere with his publicity and press agentry techniques. Although he contributed positively to our understanding of the power of publicity, his lack of honesty led to a legacy of mistrust of publicity efforts that exists sometimes even today.

George Michaelis. Organizer of the nation's first publicity firm, the Publicity Bureau in Boston in 1900, Michaelis used fact-finding publicity and personal contact to saturate the nation's press.

Ivy Lee. Often called the father of modern public relations, Lee believed the public should be informed. He recognized that good words had to be supported by positive actions on the part of individuals and organizations. His emphasis on public relations as a management function put public relations on the right track with corporate America.

George Creel. As head of the Committee on Public Information during World War I, Creel used public relations techniques to sell liberty bonds, build the Red Cross, and promote food conservation and other war-related activities. In so doing, he proved the power of public relations and trained a host of the 20th century's most influential practitioners.

Edward Bernays. An intellectual leader in the field, Bernays coined the phrase *public relations counsel,* wrote *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (the first book on public relations), and taught the first college-level public relations course at New York University in 1923. Bernays emphasized the social science contribution to public relations and was a leading advocate for public relations professionalism through practitioner licensing or credentialing. He remained an active counselor, writer, and speaker until his death in 1995 at age 103.

Arthur Page. When offered a vice presidency at AT&T, Page insisted he have a voice in shaping corporate policy. He maintained that business in a democratic country depends on public permission and approval.

John Hill. Along with Don Knowlton, John Hill opened a public relations agency in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1927. When John Hill moved to New York a few years later to open Hill & Knowlton, Knowlton was not part of the agency. The New York–based agency, though, continued to bear both their names. It became the largest public relations agency in the world and continues to rank in the top grouping. John Hill had major steel and tobacco accounts in his counseling career. His agency was sold to J. Walter Thompson in 1980 for $28 million. In 1987, it was sold to the English-based WPP Group for $85 million.

Doris Fleischman Bernays. Doris Fleischman Bernays was Edward Bernays's counselor partner from their marriage in 1922 until retirement in 1952. She counseled corporations, government agencies, and presidents along with her husband. She struggled for equality, not with her husband, but with the attitudes of American business that often paid less attention to the advice given by a female public relations practitioner.

Carl Byoir. Carl Byoir, like Edward Bernays, was another member of George Creel's Committee on Public Information in World War I. After the war he founded Carl Byoir and Associates in 1930 to promote tourism to Cuba. He was known for his use of third-party endorsements, use of newspaper advertising as a public relations tool, and development of lobbying in legislative battles for clients such as A&P, Libby-Owens-Ford, and Eastern Railroads.

Rex Harlow. Harlow was a leading public relations educator. He began teaching a public relations course at Stanford in 1939 and may have been the first full-time professor of public relations. He also founded the American Council on Public Relations in 1939. The council eventually merged with the National Association of Public Relations Councils to form the Public Relations Society of America in 1947. Harlow founded the *Public Relations Journal* in 1944 and the *Social Science Reporter* in 1952.

Moss Kendrix. Kendrix, an African American public relations pioneer, developed numerous public relations and advertising campaigns and messages for such clients as

On the organizational or client side, new services areas were added to complement the existing areas of publicity/media relations, employee publications, community relations, and audiovisual services. Chief among these was a new public affairs component to develop relationships with governmental offices in the legislative and executive branches of government. Initially, governmental affairs, or public affairs, built on community relations practices, but it soon came into its own, oftentimes as a result of new federal Great Society programs begun in the 1960s and 1970s. Civil rights, environmental, urban development, and similar programs all mandated citizen involvement or public participation assessments to determine how various **stakeholders** and established publics were affected by changes in land use, zoning, and community development activities.

Coca-Cola, Carnation, Ford Motor Company, and the National Education Association. Born in 1917 in Atlanta and educated at Morehouse College, Kendrix was editor of his college newspaper and co-founder of Phi Delta Delta Journalism Society, the only African American journalism society for decades.[19]

Kendrix was drafted in World War II and served in the U.S. Army working for the War Finance Office. There he received his on-the-job public relations experience traveling throughout the country with African American celebrities promoting war bonds.

In 1944, Moss Kendrix established his own public relations firm in Washington, D.C. His highly successful public relations work for the Republic of Liberia's Centennial Celebration launched his future career in public relations working with major corporations and national nonprofit agencies such as the National Dental Association and NEA.[20]

In addition to his public relations consulting, Kendrix also hosted the weekly radio program *Profiles of Our Times.* He died in 1989.

Denny Griswold. Griswold founded and served for almost 40 years as editor of *Public Relations News,* the first weekly newsletter devoted to public relations. Her professional experience included work for broadcasting networks, *Forbes, BusinessWeek,* and Bernays's public relations firm. Her newsletter published thousands of case studies. She not only covered the profession, but she helped give it identity by honoring many of its leaders in her newsletter.[21]

Chester Burger. A "counselor to counselors" in public relations, was honored as the first life member of the Counselor's Academy. He is renowned for his many public relations campaigns in civil rights and public diplomacy. His public relations career began, though, like many early public relations practitioners with work in the media. He joined CBS in 1941 as a page and left there in 1955 after he had risen to National Manager of CBS News. World War II interrupted his career with CBS. He served in the U.S. Army Air Force and produced the army's first broadcasts. In 1946, he returned to CBS from the army and was the nation's first television news reporter.[22]

Chester Burger & Co., his communications management consulting firm, included clients such as AT&T, Sears, American Bankers Association, American Cancer Society, Texas Instruments, and Occidental Petroleum Corporation. He is the author of six books on management.

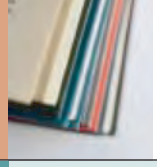
Patrick Jackson. Highly regarded public relations counselor Patrick Jackson served the profession with distinction for more than 30 years until his death in 2001. He published the trade newsletter *pr reporter,* where he reported on current research affecting public relations practice with an emphasis on applying communication and behavioral science research findings. He also served as president of the Public Relations Society of America.

Harold Burson. A native of Memphis, Burson founded Burson-Marsteller Public Relations with Bill Marsteller, an advertising agency owner, in 1953. While the Marsteller ad agency owned 51 percent of the public relations agency, the public relations firm was a freestanding, separate company. The agency grew to become the world's largest public relations agency by expanding both in the United States and to 35 countries around the world and remains at or near the top today. Burson believes behavioral change should be the goal of most public relations objectives. He remains on Burson-Marsteller's executive board as founding chair.

Betsy Ann Plank. Plank began her 63-year public relations career in 1947. In 1952 she was the first person hired by Daniel Edelman when he began his agency in Chicago. She opened Edelman's first European offices, but wasn't content to sit on the sidelines and returned in 1965 to her native Alabama to march in the civil rights struggle.

She moved from executive vice president of Edelman Worldwide to become the first woman in Illinois Bell to head a division within the corporation. She retired in 1990 but remained active until her death in 2010 with various public relations activities, but especially with her involvement in the Public Relations Student Society of America. She co-founded Champions for PRSSA, co-chaired the 1987 Commission on Public Relations Education, initiated the Certification in Education for Public Relations and established the Plank Center for Public Relations Leadership at the University of Alabama.

The new mandated citizen involvement and public participation programs exemplified the growing relationship-building and two-way communication tradition. The two-way tradition involved building long-term relationships with publics and important stakeholders for organizations to recognize. Programs were geared not toward persuasion but rather toward mutual understanding, compromise, and creating win-win situations for organizations and their affected publics and stakeholders. In many respects this approach had already been adopted across regulated industries such as public utilities, cable television businesses, and others for which license renewals and rate increases were contingent on government approval. In turn, that approval was contingent on the licensee demonstrating community support by showing that the needs of various publics had been addressed in the renewal application.



Mini•Case 2.1 Carl Byoir and FDR

Franklin Delano Roosevelt became ill with polio in 1921 while vacationing a few months after his defeat as vice president on the James Cox Democratic ticket of 1920. Roosevelt narrowly escaped death from the polio and fought the crippling effects of the disease for the rest of his life.

In 1926, Roosevelt bought a rundown spa in Warm Springs, Georgia, from friend and philanthropist George Peabody. The spa—with 1,200 acres, a hotel, and cottages—was in poor shape, but the curative powers of the hot mineral springs held promise for many polio victims.

When Roosevelt was elected governor of New York in 1928, he realized he wouldn't have time to oversee the rehabilitation effort at Warm Springs, so he asked his law partner, Basil O'Conner, to lead the effort. O'Conner formed the Warm Springs Foundation to raise money for the refurbishing of the health resort, but the stock market crash in 1929 made fund-raising difficult.

When Roosevelt became president in 1932, the foundation was nearly bankrupt. However, one of the foundation fund-raisers, Keith Morgan, hired a public relations counselor, Carl Byoir, to do the job. Byoir had founded his own public relations agency in 1930 to promote tourism to Cuba. Byoir's fund-raising idea for the Warm Springs Foundation was to create a special event to raise the money. That event turned out to be birthday balls around the country to celebrate President Roosevelt's birthday on January 30, 1934.

Byoir sent letters to newspaper editors around the country asking them to nominate a birthday ball director for their area. If an editor didn't respond, he went to either the Democratic Party chairman in the area or to the Roosevelt-appointed postmaster to ask them to do the ball. Media were besieged with information about the balls. National syndicated columnist and broadcaster Walter Winchell presented an appeal that was so good it would be used for years for both birthday balls and the March of Dimes. Radio personalities tried to outdo one another in promoting the balls. In the end 6,000 balls were held in 3,600 communities, and more than $1 million was raised for the foundation.

The next two years the event was changed to split the proceeds, with 70 percent going to local communities and 30 percent to a newly created national polio research commission.

Carl Byoir led the first three birthday balls. He then left because he had become disillusioned with President Roosevelt when FDR "packed" the Supreme Court in 1937.

But out of Byoir's effort came not only the birthday balls but also the March of Dimes, the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, and finally victory over polio. Carl Byoir had elevated fund-raising to a new level through his public relations efforts and had given new insight into techniques that public relations practitioners continue to use today.

Questions

1. What have other not-for-profits done that build on this concept of a national special event?
2. Check out the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Web site (www.stjude.org) to find out about its Thanks & Giving Program. How does it capitalize on a national audience to give to St. Jude?

Source: Scott M. Cutlip, *The Unseen Power* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1994), pp. 553–63.

Harold Burson

Harold Burson personifies this post–World War II growth of public relations. The co-founder of Burson-Marstellar Public Relations, one of the world's largest and most respected agencies, Burson came from humble beginnings. He grew up in Memphis, Tennessee. His parents were immigrants. They couldn't afford to put him through college, so he paid his way through Ole Miss by serving as a campus reporter for the *Memphis Commercial Appeal.* He served as an enlisted man in the combat engineers in World War II and later covered the Nuremberg trials for army radio network.[23]

In 1946 Burson began his own public relations agency. He soon became a leader in the postwar boom of public relations that saw a small discipline of less than 20,000 practitioners grow to a major career opportunity today, with more than 400,000 practitioners estimated by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Burson joined with Bill Marsteller in 1953 to form Burson-Marsteller, which became the world's largest public relations agency. It continues to be among the top three agencies in the world today. Burson was CEO for 35 years and managed the expansion of the agency into more than 35 countries. Crediting much of the success of the agency to hiring valuable people who often spent their entire careers with the agency, Burson says

that if he were to start again, he would pay even more attention to "recruiting, training, developing, motivating, and rewarding key employees." He suggests that the success of his agency is primarily related to four key actions:

1. Hiring a cadre of *dedicated employees* who worked for the firm for many years.
2. Developing a *family atmosphere* with a team approach for the business.
3. Creating a *corporate culture* proactively by seeding new offices with experienced Burson-Marsteller employees who hired and trained local people.
4. Positioning the firm as a *leader* by being the first to use multimedia (including its own broadcast studio with satellite uplink and downlink), crisis simulation, health care practice, and personal computers.[24]

See video clip #5 on the Online Learning Center for the interview with Harold Burson.[25]

Moss Kendrix

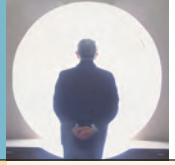
Moss Kendrix, an African American public relations pioneer, developed numerous public relations and advertising campaigns and messages for such clients as Coca-Cola, Carnation, Ford Motor Company, and the National Education Association. Kendrix was born in 1917 in Atlanta and educated at Morehouse College.[26]

Kendrix was drafted in World War II and served in the U.S. Army working for the War Finance Office, where he received his on-the-job public relations experience traveling throughout the country with African American celebrities promoting war bonds.

In 1944, Moss Kendrix established his own public relations firm in Washington, D.C. He successfully did the public relations work for the Republic of Liberia's Centennial Celebration, which launched his future career in public relations.

In addition to his public relations consulting, Kendrix also hosted a weekly radio program called *Profiles of Our Times.* He died in 1989.

Fund-raising events, such as this WalkAmerica for March of Dimes, use public relations tools to make them successful events.



Spotlight 2.2 First Lady of Public Relations

Dr. Susan Gonders
Southeast Missouri State University

Betsy Ann Plank (1924–2010) will always be "the first lady of public relations" because she achieved "firsts" that cannot be replicated. Her most enduring legacy, however, is to public relations education. "I believe a strong foundation in education is fundamental to a profession and defines it," Betsy told *PR Tactics* in 2006. "We simply have to have strong educational underpinnings and all that infers—research, ethical disciplines and responsibility to society at large."

The munchkin-sized redhead began a jump ahead of her peers, graduating from high school at 16 and from the University of Alabama at 20. After a stint at NQV radio in Pittsburgh, she began her 63-year public relations career in 1947. She and her husband, industrial film producer Sherman Rosenfield (1923–1990), made Chicago their home. Betsy was one of the first to be hired when Daniel Edelman started his agency in 1952. She traveled to Paris to open Edelman's first European offices, and she returned to her native Alabama in 1965 to join the final leg of the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery.

She became the only person to serve as president of four Chicago communication organizations: Publicity Club (1963), Welfare Public Relations Forum (1966–67), Chicago Chapter of PRSA (1969), and Public Relations Forum (1979). She was also past president of United Christian Community Services. She was communications chair of the Chicago United Way campaigns in 1972, 1978, and 1987. She was an Advisory Board member of Illinois Issues, the state's public policy periodical. She chaired the Illinois Council on Economic Education and the Citizenship Council of Metropolitan Chicago, and she served on the boards of the United Way and the Girl Scouts. She was a founder and past chair (1980–81) of The Chicago Network, an organization of leading career women, and she received its First Decade Award in 1989. At Chicago's 1984 Leader Luncheon, she was recognized as the area's leading woman in communications, and the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago named her 1992 Volunteer of the Year.

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) was founded in 1947, the same year Betsy entered the profession. She participated in the movement to found the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) during the 1967 National Conference in Philadelphia, and the first "Alpha" chapters were chartered in 1968. "It was an act of faith," Betsy said, "and, in my case, the beginning of a lifetime love affair with students." Chris Teahan was staff administrator for the first two decades of PRSSA, and he wrote "A Brief History of PRSSA" upon his retirement. Betsy spearheaded the writing of the history of the organization's second two decades, authored by Susan Gonders and Barbara DeSanto.

Betsy Ann Plank

The year of 1973 marked major milestones. Betsy became the first female president of PRSA, she completed her 21-year agency career, where she rose to executive vice president of Edelman Worldwide, and she began her 17-year corporate career. She was the first woman to head a division of Illinois Bell, and she remained with Bell/AT&T/Ameritech through 1990, with executive positions in public relations planning and external affairs.

Professionalization of the Field

More important, perhaps, were the concerted measures taken to establish public relations as a defined, respectable, and accepted field of professional practice. In fact, the 40 years from 1960 to 2000 are perhaps best characterized as the professional-development-building era in public relations. In 1947, Boston University established the first school of public relations. Two years later, 100 colleges and universities offered classes in the subject.

Perhaps more than anything else, the 50-year period between the end of World War II and the Internet explosion was characterized by professionalizing the practice. Two major national professional associations were formed from mergers of smaller groups. The largest, the PRSA, began in 1948 and now maintains a membership of 20,000, including more than 110 local chapters as well as university student organizations under the name of the Public Relations Student Society of America. See spotlight 2.2. In 1954 the PRSA developed the first code of ethics for the profession. The society set up a grievance board for code enforcement in 1962, a program of voluntary accreditation in 1964, and a rewritten ethics code in 2000.

When she was PRSA national president, she insisted that PRSSA students become self-governing. She told *PR Tactics* that "our students have proven to be of great judgment and leadership, and they've lived up to every expectation we've had of them."

As 1982–83 adviser to the PRSSA National Committee, she co-founded Friends of PRSSA (now Champions for PRSSA) to fund student awards competitions. She co-chaired the 1987 Commission on Public Relations Education, which developed guidelines for the undergraduate public relations curriculum. That led to the 1989 founding of Certification in Education for Public Relations (CEPR), a voluntary program of review that provides public relations programs of study worldwide with a stamp of approval from PRSA.

She was a founding member of the PRSA College of Fellows, and she was the first person to receive all of PRSA's top awards including:

- Gold Anvil (1977) for lifetime achievement.
- Lund Award (1989) for civic and community service.
- First recipient (2001) of the Patrick Jackson Award for distinguished service to PRSA.

Other awards and achievements included:

- First woman elected by readers of *Public Relations News* as Professional of the Year (1979).
- *PR News* named her one of the World's 40 Outstanding Public Relations Leaders (1984).
- PRSA Educators Academy honored her in 1997 with the first David W. Ferguson Award for contributions by a practitioner to public relations education.
- The Arthur W. Page Society recognized her with the Distinguished Service Award in 2000.
- She was the first Page Society Lifetime Achievement Award recipient in 2002.

Betsy was an avid historian, and because Alexander Hamilton was her favorite founding father, she was pleased to be the first woman to receive the Hamilton Award (2000) from the Institute for Public Relations. "In my philosophy, public relations is fundamental to a democratic society where people make decisions in the workplace, marketplace, the community and the voting booth," Plank said. "Its primary mission is to forge responsible relationships of understanding, trust and respect among groups and individuals—even when they disagree. Mr. Hamilton's historic work continues to inspire and inform that difficult challenge today."

In 2005, she established the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations at the University of Alabama. The center's mission is to develop research, scholarships and forums that advance the ethical practice of public relations. She was one of the few non-educator active members of the Public Relations Division (PRD) of the Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication (AEJMC), and she made a point of making sure that, by 2008, the Plank Center sponsored cash awards for the best student papers for PRD, PRSA, and other organizations. "This business has been very good to us—providing a challenging, exciting and rewarding career," Betsy told *PR Tactics*. "Surely we owe something to its future. . . . We all need a new generation capable of performing."

The PRSA Foundation named the Betsy Plank Scholarship Endowment Fund in her honor in 2006, and the Foundation recognized her at its inaugural Paladin Award Dinner in 2009.

Betsy had no siblings or biological children, but she adopted tens of thousands of "PRSSA children," some of them now retired. All of the papers, memorabilia, and assets that filled her 5,000-square-foot condo, which overlooked Lake Michigan from the living room and Cubs stadium from the dining room, went to the Plank Center. From this bequest and from the impact she made in her lifetime, Betsy will continue to inspire generations of new public relations professionals.

Source: Susan Gonders, professor of public relations, Southeast Missouri State University. Dr. Gonders, co-chair of PRSA Education Affairs Committee, is also coordinator for the certification program, CEPR, for PRSA.

In 1970 the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) was formed by the merger of the International Council of Industrial Editors and the Association of Industrial Editors. The IABC has been at the forefront in underwriting research studies, examining the current state and future of the public relations profession. Both PRSA and IABC now administer professional continuing education programs for their members and an accreditation program. Practitioners who pass both oral and written accreditation exams are deemed accredited and allowed to place the initials APR or ABC after their names on their business cards. PRSA uses APR (Accredited Public Relations); IABC uses ABC (Accredited Business Communicator).

In addition to PRSA and IABC, today more than a dozen national public relations organizations are based in the United States, not to mention those whose membership is largely outside the United States. They're listed here to indicate the range of professionally organized specialties within public relations:

Religious Public Relations Council, founded in 1929.

National School Public Relations Association, founded in 1935.

Public Relations Society of America, founded in 1948. Includes 21,000 members, not counting members of the affiliated Public Relations Student Society of America.

Agricultural Relations Council, founded in 1953.

International Public Relations Association, founded in 1955.

National Society of Fund-Raising Executives, founded in 1960.

National Investor Relations Institute, founded in 1969.

International Association of Business Communicators, founded in 1970 and now with 13,000 members.

Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), founded in 1975.

National Association of Government Communicators, founded in 1976.

Issue Management Council, founded in 1982.

The Arthur Page Society, founded in 1983.

Society of Healthcare Strategy and Marketing Development, founded in 1996 and subsuming previous hospital and health care public relations associations.

Association of Counseling Firms, founded in 1999.

Professional and specialized public relations organizations also started professional magazines and newsletters, such as the *Public Relations Journal* and *Communication World,* which were followed by other private newsletters and trade magazines, such as the *Ragan Report, PR News, PR Tactics, PR Week, pr reporter,* and *Public Relations Quarterly*. Taken together, these professional publications form a distinctive literature aimed at those practitioners.

Public relations texts were published once college-level courses were offered, first as a concentration within the journalism or mass communication major and later within speech communication or integrated communication. Then came the academic journals, where university professors published research findings or developed new theoretical traditions to explain the practice of public relations. The principal journals were *Public Relations Review, Public Relations Research and Education, Public Relations Research Annual,* and the *Journal of Public Relations Research.* A public relations literature or body of knowledge was developing separately from related fields such as advertising, journalism, public opinion, and interpersonal communication. Those conceptual underpinnings were grounded in theory and are outlined chronologically in spotlight 2.3.

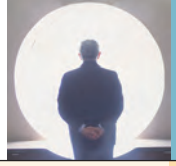
Taken together, these new professional magazines, texts, and research publications all reinforced the growing consensus that public relations work could be organized in terms of a four-step process—research, planning, communication and action (implementation), and evaluation. As time went on, the field gained even more respect as program plans expanded to include measurable objectives and follow-up evaluation measures to assess the impact, the cost, and ways to improve future campaigns and programs.

New Stakeholder Groups

In the late 1960s and the 1970s, democratically inspired social movements used effective public relations techniques to oppose business interests. With little money or staff, environmental group members, for example, became proficient at staging tree huggings, roadblocks, and other events whose conflict themes were almost guaranteed to generate television footage. They effectively used not only alternative and specialized media but also journalistic conventions, sometimes at the expense of losing their hard edge, according to sociologists Todd Gitlin and Charlotte Ryan.[27]

Conceptual Traditions in Public Relations

Spotlight 2.3



1920s: Systematic understanding of the importance and nature of public opinion emerged not only in terms of polling and scientific measurement but also as a social organizing process around issues.

1950s: Persuasion and social influence principles, and especially those set forth with the Yale Communication Program, provided the strategies for establishing, maintaining, and changing opinions and attitudes.

1960s: The diffusion of innovations research tradition served as a conceptual framework for public relations practitioners, health communicators, and Peace Corps officials on how to combine interpersonal and media communication to change behaviors. Most recently, the diffusion framework has been used to illustrate the use of marketing communication elements, including publicity, advertising, sales promotion, and direct selling.

1970s: Situational theory of publics was put forth. While public relations practitioners use a range of audience segmentation techniques, J. Grunig's situational theory explains which publics will become most active regarding specific issues. Relational communication, with its roots in interpersonal communication, set forth by Rogers and Millar, accounts for conditions prompting and inhibiting relational development.

1960s–1990s: Social psychological foundations underpinning public relations practice flourished alongside specific public relations theories. Many of these theories are used to study cognitive or knowledge change and information processing in public relations and health communication. These include attitude/action consistency, expectancy value theory, co-orientation, theory of reasoned action, framing theory, social cognitive theory, and game theory.

1970s–2000: Normative influences on the practice of public relations have underpinned important research on practitioner roles, feminization of the field, and other gender-related effects.

1980s–2000: J. Grunig's four models of public relations based on one-way/two-way and balanced/unbalanced communication have prompted the greatest amount of recent research and theory development in public relations.

Social and organizational structural influences on the growth and nature of public relations work, including research on public relations in different industry categories, structurally determined cross-cultural impacts on the practice, and encroachment on the public relations functions by related areas, became evident.

1990s–2010: Critical theory approaches emerged. Scholars in this tradition believe that the practice and study of public relations from a business and organizational standpoint mask power differences in society and ignore nonmainstream groups, including social movements and third-party candidates.

Societal concerns during the late 1960s and 1970s prompted businesses and their public relations agencies to place new emphasis on governmental and community relations, issue tracking, issue management, and strategic planning. This was especially the case with regulated businesses, such as utilities and telecommunication firms whose rate structures, franchises, and licensing requirements placed a premium on effective relationship building among key constituencies.

THE GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY

Another distinct phase in public relations history emerged around 1990 and was characterized by (1) the use of the Internet and other new communication technologies and (2) the growth of public relations agencies, which occurred oftentimes either by merging with larger public relations agencies or advertising agencies or by forming alliances with other firms in regional cities.

The 1990s were also characterized by the growth of specialty practices in public relations. Investor relations, though begun 20 years earlier, came into its own as technology companies sought venture capital, became stock-held corporations through initial public offerings, and later merged with other public corporations. Thus, keeping stockholders informed and attracting new investors became a central, rather than peripheral, public relations function.

By 1990 leading firms had aligned their corporate giving with ongoing community relations programs. As well, their global reach throughout the 1990s led to more focus on corporate social responsibility in general rather than corporate giving in a narrow sense. Issues management and environmental scanning functions became more systematic, owing to computer databases and tracking systems in which organizations could join chat groups, listservs, and blogs.

The opening of new markets on a global scale led to systems of global strategic design with local implementation and a noticeably heavier emphasis given to intercultural issues or differences in the ways companies could offer themselves and their products in different cultures and regions of the world.

At home, a much greater degree of specialization began occurring at agencies as they sought to develop more subject matter competence in key industrial niches, including technology, health care, financial and investor institutions, and international practice.

Another milestone was reached when it became known that more and more public relations practitioners were seeking master's degrees either to become more specialized within the field of public relations or as a way of taking on more general management responsibilities.

The 1990s was a time of explosive growth for public relations and corporate communication stemming in large part from (1) growth and use of the Internet, (2) global communication demands, and (3) proliferating communication channels.

The Internet to Social Media

The Internet changed the nature of public relations work. To put the impact of the Internet in perspective, those who study media adoption note that radio took 30 years to reach an audience of 50 million, and TV took 13 years; by contrast—the Internet took just four years. By 2000, e-mail had become the preferred medium for reaching reporters with whom an organization had already developed relationships.[28] But by 2010 social media through the Internet have provided another major change for the public relations practitioner.

Before the Internet, the thrust of media relations work was "pushing" information from the organization to the desks of media reports, producers, and editors via news releases, news tips, and press kits. That all changed because the Web gives the reporter the opportunity to pull and parse needed company information from the Web site and all of its links without ever going through the public relations or media relations office. The Internet is a very different and more powerful media relations tool than almost any other tool used in the preceding 50 years.[29]

The more recent use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube has provided another tool for public relations practitioners. Although it has become commonplace for reporters to check Web sites while writing their stories, they now often depend on social media like Facebook to solicit quotes and additional information. Twitter is often the tool for breaking spot news to the media, and YouTube can be used to post video stories or interviews for use by the media.

Search engines like Google have also revolutionized the way journalists and public relations practitioners gather information. Likewise, blogs of a given subject give readers a pulse on current issues. They, too, like Facebook, can be used to gather quotes for stories.

Journalists and public relations practitioners are not the only ones reaping the benefits of the Internet and social media. Fund-raising groups, nonprofit organizations, and political/social movements all use these new and relatively "free" technologies to meet

their needs, allowing them to operate more competitively within their limited budgets. See chapter 9 for more about the use of social media in media relations.

Global Communication Demands

Just as Internet Web sites and e-mail functions have reshaped public relations practice, so too has the creation of new consumer and financial markets around the world. Competition for worldwide markets speeds product introduction times. As a result, trade magazine editors and financial reports clamor for updated information almost by the hour. Gone, then, are the days when publicity releases could be planned and scheduled weeks and months in advance.

The new worldwide public relations environment means working simultaneously with the media across various cultures, nations, and regions. Under these conditions, public relations practitioners are forced to be better versed in intercultural communication practices and to understand differences in the ways media reporters and editors are approached or contacted in different cultures.

In Japan, for example, contact with the media is made through "press clubs" maintained separately by each industry or at government press rooms maintained by each government minister. Press club secretaries decide whether to issue press releases, call press conferences, or do nothing. The press club seal of endorsement—especially regarding press conferences—markedly increases newspaper coverage.

Proliferating Communication Channels

The proliferation of media channels—especially cable channels and new magazine titles—continues in response to individual and media desires for more specialized information tailored to the various reading and viewing interests of investors, customers, employees, donors, and so on. For public relations practitioners this means matching the qualities of traditional and **online** media to the information needs of their target audiences. Ray Kotcher, senior partner and CEO of Ketchum, explains how channel proliferation affects media relations work: "At the moment we are being asked to deal on a more strategic level (make this a new development) because of this incredible momentum in the media, messaging, and information that's out there. Think about it. We only had one NBC network 15 years ago. Now we have CNBC, MSNBC, and I don't know how many NBC's online."[30]

Wreck on the Pennsylvania Railroad, 1906

Case Study

By Craig E. Aronoff
Kennesaw State College

Severe railroad regulations passed in 1903 and 1906 caused Alexander J. Cassatt, president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, to seek the counsel of Ivy Ledbetter Lee concerning how to deal better with the press and the public. Lee went right to work. He believed in absolute frankness with the press. Veteran railroad men were distressed at Lee's behavior. They were convinced that revealing facts about accidents would frighten customers.

A golden opportunity for Lee to put his ideas into practice soon arose. A train wrecked on the Pennsylvania Railroad main line near the town of Gap, Pennsylvania. As was its time-honored practice, the company sought to suppress all news of the accident.

When Ivy Lee learned of the situation, he took control. He contacted reporters, inviting them to come to the accident scene at company expense. He provided facilities to help them in their work. He gave out information for which the journalists had not asked.

The railroad's executives were appalled at Lee's actions. His policies were seen as unnecessary and destructive. How could the propagation of such bad news do anything but harm the railroad's freight and passenger business?

At about the time of the wreck on the Pennsylvania, another train accident struck the rival New York Central. Sticking with its traditional policy, the Central sought to avoid the press and restrict information flow concerning the situation. Confronted with the Central's behavior, and having tasted Lee's approach to public relations, the press was furious with the New York line. Columns and editorials poured forth chastising the Central and praising the Pennsylvania. Lee's efforts resulted in positive publicity, increased credibility, comparative advantages over the Central, and good, constructive press coverage and relations. Lee's critics were silenced.

Earl Newsom, himself a public relations giant, looked back at this accident nearly 60 years later and said:

> This whole activity of which you and I are a part can probably be said to have its beginning when Ivy Lee persuaded the directors of the Pennsylvania Railroad that the press should be given all the facts on all railway accidents—even though the facts might place the blame on the railroad itself.*

When Ivy Lee died in 1934, among the many dignitaries at his funeral were the presidents of both the Pennsylvania and the New York Central railroads.

Sources: Material for this case was gathered from Ray Hiebert's *Courtier to the Crowd* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1966), pp. 55–61; Eric Goldman's *Two-Way Street* (Boston: Bellman Publishing, 1948), p. 8. *Earl Newsom, "Business Does Not Function by Divine Right," *Public Relations Journal* (January 1963), p. 4.

Questions

1. Were Lee's actions in response to the railroad accident consistent with practice today? Explain.
2. Had the New York Central accident not occurred, what do you think would have happened to Ivy Lee and his relationship with the Pennsylvania Railroad? Do you think the course of public relations development would have been affected?
3. In certain totalitarian states, news of accidents and disasters is often largely suppressed. What do you consider their reasons to be for retaining a posture given up by American public relations practice more than 80 years ago?

Summary

The scope of public relations work today is clearly nothing like it was in early times or even during the jump-start period following World War I. Even so, the pattern of development can be seen in the four orienting traditions: the rhetorician and press agent tradition, the journalistic publicity tradition, the persuasive communication campaign tradition, and, finally, a relationship-building and two-way communication tradition. We close with a quote from veteran public relations educator and historian Scott M. Cutlip who wrote in *The Unseen Power*, "The essentiality of public relations as a management function that Ivy Lee envisaged in the early 1900s becomes clearer each passing day as our global society becomes even more dependent on effective communication and on an interdependent, competitive world."[31]

For self-testing and additional chapter resources, go to the Online Learning Center at **www.mhhe.com/lattimore4e.**

Key Terms

online
press agents
propaganda of the deed
rhetoricians
stakeholders

Notes

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