THE MANAGEMENT AND PRACTICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

THE MANAGEMENT AND PRACTICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Norman Stone

© Norman Stone 1995

Foreword © Norman A. Hart 1995

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■ List of Abbreviations

ABC	Association of Business Communicators
ABFD	Association of British Factors and Discounters
ABSA	Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts
ACBE	Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment
BA	British Airways
BAIE	British Association of Industrial Editors
BDHF	British Dental Health Foundation
BIMBOs	management buy-outs and buy-ins
CAD	computer aided design
CBFA	Co-operative Bank Financial Advisers
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
ccm	column centimetres
CCTV	closed circuit television
CDC	Cherwell District Council
CERP	Confédération Européenne des Relations Publiques
COTS	cumulative opportunities to see
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CURM	Commercial Union Risk Management
DML	Devonport Management Limited
DMU	decision making unit
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EAV	equivalent advertising value
ECU	European Currency Unit
EPOS	electronic point of sale
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
EU	European Union
fmcg	fast-moving consumer goods
IES	Institute for Employment Studies
ILR	Independent Local Radio
IM	Institute of Management
IMS	Institute of Manpower Studies
IPR	Institute of Public Relations
ISBA	Incorporated Society of British Advertisers
IT	information technology
JSI	Jones Stroud Insulations
LCTC	Lambeth Children's Theatre Company
M&S	Marks and Spencer
MBI	management buy-in

MBO	management buy-out
MORI	Market Opinion Research International
MU	Mothers' Union
NCC	National Consumer Council
NOP	National Opinion Polls
NPCA	National Peanut Council of America
NT	New Technology (Windows)
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OHP	overhead projector
OS	open systems
OSI	Open Systems Interconnection
OSiS	Open Systems information Service
OTS	opportunities to see
OXY	Occidental Petroleum (Caledonia) Ltd
PACE	Police and Criminal Evidence Act
PRCA	Public Relations Consultants Association
QTV	Queue Television
SVQ	Scottish Vocational Qualification
TMAB	Toyota Members' Advisory Board
TMC	Toyota Motor Corporation
TMME	Toyota Motor Europe Marketing and Engineering SA
TSB	Trustee Savings Bank
UNICE	Union of Industrial and Employers Confederation of Europe
VNR	video news release
WDC	Wycombe District Council

■ Foreword

I was very pleased to be asked to contribute a Foreword to Norman Stone's *The Management and Practice of Public Relations* because the actual practice of the business is moving so fast that it seemed to me that a really up-to-date text was exactly what was needed at the present time.

There are, of course, a large number of existing texts, but many of them, sadly, are dated and to some large degree based simply upon personal experiences and recollections.

The Management and Practice of Public Relations is noteworthy in a number of respects. It is obviously extremely well researched over a very wide range of subjects, and is accompanied by a host of practical examples. Furthermore it discusses PR matters from the point of view of today's practice rather than yesterday's. The range of authorities and references is comprehensive and makes it an ideal book both for practitioners and students. It really is a book for the 1990s and beyond.

Finally it is written in a down-to-earth style which makes it eminently readable, and is structured in such a way as to enable the reader to find readily that particular part which is of special interest.

This is Norman Stone's second book on public relations. I look forward to his next one.

NORMAN A. HART
Chairman, International Public Relations Foundation

■ Acknowledgements

Ritchie Calder, who was just about the best science journalist I ever knew, used to say that every book has its grandparents and godparents.

The grandparents are those people whose knowledge, experience and attitudes you absorb almost without realising it; they should be acknowledged. The godparents are those whose brains you pick, whose ideas you crib, whose words you quote direct, and who must be acknowledged without fail.

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Throughout the book I have quoted copiously from newspapers, magazines, publishers and media organisations, notably *IPR Journal* (Harvey Smith), *PR Week* (Stephen Farish and Ed Charles), *Management Today* (Charles Skinner), *Professional Manager* (Westerly Donahue), *brand strategy* (Joanna Perkin), National Magazines (Tracey Richards and Joanne Thomas), Benn's Media (Karen Roffey), *Intermedica* (Ian Swash), NTC Publications (David Roberts) and Reuters (Steve Garvey).

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To all these, and the many others whose names ought to be there, I can only say 'Thanks, I couldn't have done it without you.'

NORMAN STONE

■ Introduction

To be without method is deplorable, but to depend entirely on method is worse.

Wang An-chieh of Hsiu-shui¹

Take any four weeks in the last twelve months. Study the national, regional and trade press. You are likely to find 100–150 announcements of public relations (PR) contracts, or of substantial amendments to existing contracts, or of appointments of in-house public relations professionals. That's at the rate of at least 1200–1800 per year. There will have been many more such contracts and appointments which were not announced, but which happened just the same.

As in the course of those twelve months, so in the next or any future year; pretty well every type of business will be engaged in public relations, from airlines to art galleries, lawyers to local government, shoes to show business.

It has to be said that in a few of these instances public relations will be used as whitewash, and in one or two as pure eyewash. But mostly you will find the management and practice of public relations playing an increasingly important and successful part in the management and practice of business.

According to many respectable and respected authorities, public relations is solely about organisational representation, corporate image and corporate identity, while everything else is something else, and not PR. That clear distinction has an austere logic that is easy to understand, and I would not even try to persuade anyone otherwise. It is, however, too restrictive, pure and hard-edged for our purposes. This book is about the management and *practice* of public relations. In my experience, it is not theory, concept or principle that constitutes and defines practice, but what the practitioners actually do.

The Institute of Public Relations (IPR) recently added to its formal definition of public relations practice as the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics.

One additional definition is that public relations is about reputation: it is the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you.

The other new definition is this: 'Public relations practice is the discipline concerned with the reputation of organisations (or products, services or individuals) with the aim of earning understanding and support.'²

For the next couple of hundred pages we will explore that practice in breadth and in depth. Theoretical boundaries will be crossed and every specialism

plundered – advertising, direct mail, graphic design, media relations, product promotion, whatever – as we learn how mutually beneficial relationships are developed and sustained between the people who affect an organisation's activities and those affected by these activities.

Success in the practice of public relations is recognised annually by the Public Relations Consultants Association (PRCA) in their Outstanding Consultancy awards and by the IPR Sword of Excellence awards to individuals and organisations. Submissions for the IPR awards have to cover:

- *information*: analysis, research and definition of operational objectives
- *planning*: drawing up a strategy and costed action plan
- *action*: communicating and carrying out the programme
- *measurement*: monitoring and evaluating progress, results and budgets; reassessment and modification of programmes as necessary (this should preferably include evaluative comment from the chief executive of the organisation for which the programme was designed)³

These four stages give us the basis of an approach to public relations that will be methodical enough to satisfy Wang An-chieh while leaving room for creativity and opportunism.

Every chapter in this book is relevant to one or more of these stages, with what I hope you will agree is just the right amount of method (neither 'deplorable' nor 'worse').

Chapters 1–4 deal with broad functions: what PR can do, and what it cannot; comparisons between in-house PR and consultancy; the relationship between PR and marketing; and the role of research in PR.

Chapters 5–14 are about public relations in action. Corporate and financial PR; government relations; employee communications and community relations; that sector which is neither commercial nor public, known as the third sector; relations with customers and consumers; the media; organisation and training; budgeting; crisis PR; measuring results.

There is an essential minimum of theory, and a good deal of practicality. There are case histories, of widely different kinds, each authenticated by a protagonist. Many of these have won IPR, PRCA or other awards. In addition, plenty of brief examples are quoted, drawn from the experience of numerous different practitioners. You will be helped to put together your own personal portfolio of public relations practice (more about that in Chapter 1). The book's Appendices are full of reference material, and the Index should help you to home in on a particular point quickly.

Guidelines and checklists summarise some of the lessons I have learned over the years and others I am still learning. Two guidelines come before all others, and the first one is this: in public relations, always tell the truth. You have options about how much of it you tell at any one time, to whom you tell it and when, but if you are to succeed in the management and practice of public relations, you must tell the truth. There are five powerful reasons for this:

- telling the truth protects and enhances your own credibility, and that of your company or client
- if you don't tell the truth, the way is open for somebody else to, and so damage your credibility
- journalists will look to you – and, by extension, to your company or client – as an authority in your subject area
- it is an encouragement to your company or client to do right
- you don't have to remember what you said last time

The second guideline is equally uncompromising: whatever the pressures and temptations, never deceive yourself. Come to think of it, that also means tell the truth (in this case to yourself).

I hope *The Management and Practice of Public Relations* will answer many of the more common questions about what working in public relations is like and how PR can permeate every aspect of a business. But please do not rely only on my answers. Challenge them and check them out.

If this book is to be of lasting use to you, it must encourage you to find your own answers, and, more important still, to ask your own questions.