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Aa

Above the line

'Above the line' and '**below the line**' are marketing terms. **Promotion** or **advertising** of a product or service using media such as television, radio, magazines and newspapers is known as above the line because this type of **promotion** requires commission to be paid to an **advertising** agency in contrast to **public relations, marketing** and **promotions** which are regarded as **below the line**. The 'line' is an imaginary line between those **advertising** media which pay commission to **advertising** agencies and those which do not. Recently the division between above the line and below the line has become indistinct.

ACCA

ACCA (Awareness, Comprehension, Conviction, Action) is part of the **motivating sequence**.

Consumers are first made aware that the product or service exists. They must then comprehend what the product or service is about and how it will benefit them. Customers must then be convinced to buy the product or service and finally they must take action and either buy the product or engage with the service.

See AIDA model, four Ps, motivating sequence.

Active publics

Active publics are a subset of an organisation's overall **publics**. They are groups of people who do something about a **public relations** problem. For example, if a local factory expands its business and causes an increase in local traffic levels, the community may decide to blockade the factory gates or write letters of complaint to the local press. Active publics can be divided into three further categories: **all-issue publics**, **single-issue publics** and **hot-issue publics**.

Activism

Activism is intentional action by a group of people to bring about social, organisational or political change. **Pressure groups**, interest groups or citizen groups of activists are formed when two or more people organise on behalf of a cause to exert pressure on an organisation to change the way it functions. Activists are motivated by a desire to correct apparent injustices, for example the abuse of worker, animal or human rights, or when they perceive danger, for example damage to the environment or to the nation's health. Activism against an organisation can at best damage and at worst ruin its **reputation** and activists therefore have to be handled sensitively. Organisations most at **risk** from activists include manufacturing operations, especially those with pollution potential, organisations carrying out **research** on animals, e.g. universities and pharmaceutical companies, those whose products, for example GM foods, vaccines, CFCs and tobacco, are perceived as damaging, and organisations whose activities, for example mining, farming, oil exploration and refining and nuclear power plants, are regarded as damaging. All democratic governments and publicly quoted companies are open to shareholder activism. Recognising the potential for activism against an organisation forms part of the **public relations issues planning** or **boundary scanning** process. If an organisation is targeted by activists, it must engage in **crisis management**.

Deegan (2001) suggests that the dynamics of activism are thus:

- Activists represent a growing threat to organisations in an increasingly pluralistic society.
- They use a wide range of **tactics** including direct pressure on those targeted as well as seeking media, public, regulatory and government intervention. More recently activists are targeting financial institutions which fund certain organisations.
- Regardless of the **tactics** used or the length or the severity of the resulting conflict, activists disrupt those they target.
- It is the organisation to a large extent which determines how aggressive or co-operative activists will be.
- Activists are more likely to co-operate with organisations which are open to **negotiation**.
- Organisations which learn how to deal effectively with activists improve their functioning in a broader sense.

Deegan suggests that **public relations** practitioners and communications specialists should not:

- ignore activists because this increases the likelihood that they will seek third-party intervention from the media, the government and the public to force change – avoiding **issues** encourages them to spiral out of control;
- seek to influence **public opinion** in response to activist pressure because it is extremely difficult to change people's behaviour and **attitudes**, especially in turbulent environments;
- adopt aggressive behaviour, such as trying to discredit groups, initiating lawsuits against them or seeking to undermine their funding, as this is likely to require endless financial and human **resources** – groups prosper when threatened and an organisation's reputation can be badly damaged by being publicly presented as a bully;
- seek to persuade activists of the 'bigger picture' – this has limited effect as activists resist being persuaded.

Deegan suggests a way forward in dealing with activists. She claims that the views of activists and organisations are not as disparate as either side believes – it is a lack of trust which keeps them apart. She claims that activists are less likely to be aggressive or seek third-party involvement if the targeted organisation takes a co-operative stance and adopts **two-way symmetrical communication** based on proactive **negotiation** and **conflict resolution**. The emphasis of **negotiation** should be based on building lasting relationships with activists and response and adjustment to their changing views. **Research** into the organisation's changing environment and the development of a strategic communications plan are key elements of **two-way symmetrical communication**. Ongoing **evaluation** helps to keep the plan effective and relevant.

See **conflict resolution, negotiation, win-win**.

Deegan, D. (2001) *Managing Activism*. London: Kogan Page.

Advertising

Advertising is the paid-for, one-way **message** or set of communications from a sponsor via the media to an **audience**. Advertising promotes a product to an existing customer or to a potential customer. Advertising is part of the **marketing** programme and is often used to support the **public relations programme/plan**. Advertising creates a desire to buy and relies on sending **messages**

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about the **features** and **benefits** of a product, a service, a cultural artefact or a lifestyle.

The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising defines advertising as: 'the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably'.

See **AIDA model, marketing**.

Burtenshaw, K., Mahon, N. and Barfoot, C. (2007) *The Fundamentals of Creative Advertising*. Switzerland: Ava Publishing.
www.ipa.co.uk

Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)

The ASA is the independent British self-regulatory organisation of the **advertising** industry. It is funded by a charge on the advertising industry, thereby operating a system of self-regulation. The ASA's purpose is to support best practice in **advertising** by ensuring that it is 'legal, honest and truthful'.

www.asa.org.uk

Advertorials

Advertorials might be regarded as a cross between an advertisement and a newsworthy **press release**. When **advertising** space is sold in a magazine or other publication, an advertorial in the shape of a feature article is run alongside it. Advertorials can include advertisements for a **brand** masked as an **editorial** or as a **feature article** recommending a **brand** name. Rules have been introduced to counter this misuse of **journalistic** licence. 'Reader advertisements' written in a **journalistic** style resembling **editorial** copy must be distinguished by the words, 'Advertisement' or 'Advertiser's Announcement' in compliance with the British Code of Advertising Practice. Similar advertorials featured on television or radio are known as **infomercials**.

Advisory fees

Advisory fees cover consultancy advice, attending meetings, preparing reports and **proposals**, etc. This is normally based on a fixed amount of time per month and paid to a **public relations** practitioner or **consultancy** on a retainer basis or on a project basis.

Agenda-setting theory

Agenda-setting theory is the theory that the **mass media** influence **audiences** by acting as a framing device and choosing which

stories they consider newsworthy and by how much coverage and prominence they give them. **Public relations** practitioners often work with the media to put an organisation's message about an **issue** or programme forward and so make it salient to the **audience**. It is generally accepted that **journalists** set the news agenda and therefore relay which narratives the public should be conscious of – the notion of agenda-setting relies on the transfer of **issues** from the media to the public. Studies by McCombs and Shaw (1972) and Rogers and Dearing (1988) focused on awareness and information within agenda-setting. They investigated the agenda-setting function of the **mass media** in the 1968 presidential campaign and attempted to assess the relationship between what voters in one community said were important **issues** and the actual content of media **messages** used during the campaign. They concluded that the **mass media** exerted a significant influence on what voters considered to be the major **issues** of the campaign.

McCombs, M. E. and Shaw, D. L. (1972) 'The agenda-setting function in the mass media', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36 (Summer), 176–187.

Rogers, E. M. and Dearing, J. W. (1988) 'Agenda-setting research: Where has it been, where is it going?', in J. A. Anderson (ed.) *Communication Yearbook* 11, 555–594. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

AIDA model

AIDA (create Awareness, generate Interest, develop Desire, initiate Action) is a purpose and flow **marketing** and **promotional** term, also used by PR practitioners. Initially people become Aware of an idea or product or service but have little knowledge about it. Then they develop an Interest and seek out more information. Then they become persuaded of the **benefits** of the idea or product or service and develop a Desire to buy it. Finally they show their support by taking Action and buying the product or service.

See **ACCA, BFD formula, four Ps, motivating sequence**.

All-issue publics

All-issue publics are a subset of an organisation's overall **publics** and are a further division of an organisation's **active publics**. They are groups of people who are active on all **issues** affecting an organisation. They may well be opposed to the organisation in principle and be prepared to disrupt all of its activities. It is important for **public relations** practitioners to consider this group of **publics** very carefully in their **issues management** planning.

See **publics**.

Ambient media

Ambient media is the use of non-traditional or alternative media. It uses unusual settings to convey a message, such as projections on to buildings, messages on the back of car park receipts or on supermarket trolleys, **slogans** on hot air balloons, giant posters on the sides of trucks, messages via Bluetooth, advertisements on cash machines, etc. There has been a growth in the use of ambient media recently owing to its general versatility, a decline in the power of traditional media and a greater demand for **point of sale** communications. New technology has also revolutionised outdoor media, producing improved targeting, reduced costs and greater accountability. Ambient advertisements are very effective at pushing **messages** into the consciousness of consumers, particularly when the **audience** is specifically targeted. Ambient media can produce mass attention and focus in centralised locations or can be used to interact directly with consumers when they are involved in everyday activities such as shopping or travelling.

White, R. (2004) 'Ambient media – best practice', *Admap*, Oct.

Ambush marketing

Ambush marketing can be considered an exploitation of the **sponsorship** often associated with major sporting events such as the World Cup or the Olympics. Here an official sponsor has to compete with an unauthorised **publicity** seeker. Ambush marketers will find ways to communicate **messages** about their products through a wide range of unpaid-for **marketing** activities and will ultimately succeed in deflecting some of the attention away from the official sponsor on to themselves.

Analysis

A Analysis is the first stage in the planning cycle of a **public relations programme/plan**. It entails **research** into **issues** which will affect the overall plan and looks at both the **micro environment** and the **macro environment**. Analysis includes both a **PEST analysis** and a **SWOT analysis**.

Analysis and **research** can be done by either in-house **researchers** or external **researchers** and can be either **qualitative** or **quantitative**. **Primary research** involves finding out the required information first-hand and can include **questionnaires**, one-to-one **interviews**, **telephone interviews**, **focus groups**, **internet groups**, **media research** and **communication audits**.

Gregory, A. (2004) *Planning and Managing Public Relations Campaigns*. London: Kogan Page.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

An AGM is held once a year to inform an organisation's interested parties and members about their previous and future activities. It is an opportunity for members to ask questions relating to finances and any decisions the organisation will take in the future. It is an important meeting for the **public relations** manager who will have had input in the writing of the **Annual Report** presented at the AGM.

Annual Report

An Annual Report is a document often written or overseen by the **public relations** practitioner. A company presents its Annual Report at the **Annual General Meeting (AGM)** for approval by its shareholders. An Annual Report is made up of financial reports and other reports including the Chairman's report and the organisation's **mission statement**.

Apathetic publics

Apathetic publics is the term James **Grunig** gave to a group of people he defined as not really **publics** at all. These people have no interest in the organisation. However, it can be argued that as a subset they are important to **public relations** practitioners for their *potential* to become more engaged.

See publics.

Aristotle

Aristotle (384-322 BC) was a Greek philosopher. He wrote on such diverse subjects as physics, metaphysics, poetry, logic, **rhetoric**, politics, government, **ethics**, biology and zoology. He is often cited as being the first and foremost authority on communication. His work on **rhetoric** – the influencing and persuading of others through the spoken word – developed in democratic Greece and his thoughts are highly influential today. Many contemporary politicians, speech-writers and speech-makers depend on the **techniques** he advocated, especially the 'triple', as used by Tony Blair in his 'education, education, education' speech. Aristotle suggested that communication consisted of three elements:

- *ethos*: the nature or qualities of the communicator;
- *logos*: the nature, structure and content of the message itself;
- *pathos*: the nature, feelings and thoughts of the receiver or **audience**.

Hiltunen, A. (2002) *Aristotle in Hollywood, the Anatomy of Successful Storytelling*. Bristol: Intellect Books.

Articles

Also known as **feature articles**, or features, an article is a ‘story’ written exclusively for one publication. Articles are written in a different style to **press releases** and have a strong narrative flow. Articles take time to prepare, **research** and write. The writer needs to renegotiate with the publication’s editor, check and recheck drafts and sources and prepare images. Articles are written by an authority on a subject and are often kept as reference material. They are an excellent way for a **public relations** practitioner to communicate **messages** to readers. All articles need a theme, idea or subject. Articles should never be written speculatively. The chosen theme needs to be strong enough to persuade the editor of the publication to publish.

Once the writer has thought out the ideas for the article and worked out the preliminaries, he/she needs to propose the article to the editor. The **proposal** letter should include:

- the idea (theme)
- any clearances obtained or to be obtained for permission to publish
- any clearance for **research**.

Once the publisher commissions the idea, the writer needs the following information in order to proceed:

- the word count
- any special treatments needed
- the type and number of illustrations or images
- the **issue** date of publication
- the copy dates and deadlines
- the fees.

When writing the actual article, the writer should consider the following:

- the opening paragraph or lead-in – the beginning should lead into the body of the article;
- the previous or present situation – and any related problems;
- the search for a solution – the ‘core’ of the article;
- the solution and results achieved – how it was done;
- the closing paragraph – with a summary and perhaps ‘a look ahead’ or ‘a way forward’.

A well-**researched**, well-written and illustrated feature article is an excellent form of **public relations** and benefits the organisation, its products and its business.

Associated Press

The Associated Press is an American global news network. It is the world's largest news agency and is a co-operative owned by its contributing newspapers, radio and television stations who all contribute to it and use material written by its staffers. It is accessed by **public relations** professionals all over the world.

Asymmetrical communication

Unlike **symmetrical communication**, asymmetrical communication flows one way from sender to receiver and is considered to be a **closed system**. Asymmetrical communication methods generally focus on achieving short-term attitude change and are used by organisations primarily interested in having their **publics** come around to their way of thinking rather than the organisation changing itself, its policies or its views. The asymmetrical model of communication is supported by several presuppositions:

- there is an inability to see the organisation as outsiders do (internal orientation);
- information flows out but not in (**closed system**);
- the control of cost is more important than innovation (efficiency);
- the leader of the organisation is considered to know best (elitism);
- there is a **resistance** to change (conservatism);
- there is a desire for tradition, to keep the organisation 'together';
- there is central authority (no autonomy for employees).

See Grunig's four models of public relations, symmetrical communication, systems theory.

Attitudes

Schiffman and Kanuk (1996) claim that attitudes are a learned predisposition to behave in a consistently favourable or unfavourable way with respect to a given object. Attitudes are mental constructs or thoughts. They are learned and developed through experience, and as such are fluid and changing. They are not directly observable yet are the key to successful **persuasion**. Because individuals are favourably inclined towards an object or they are not, attitudes are therefore deemed to be *evaluative*. Attitudes have two components: **beliefs** and **values**.

See attitude formation.

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Cain, S. and Maxwell, M. (2004) *How to Get What You Want: Unlock the Magic of Your Mind and Achieve Your Goals*. Oxford: How To Books.

Schiffman, L. G. and Kanuk, L. (1996) *Consumer Behaviour*, 6th edn. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Attitude formation

American academics, Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000) claim that **public relations** is about changing or neutralising hostile opinions and **attitudes**, crystallising uninformed or latent opinions and **attitudes** or conserving favourable opinions and **attitudes**. Attitude formation is a continuous process. As knowledge and experience blend with existing **attitudes**, modified **attitudes** then emerge. Former **research** carried out in order to design the **public relations programme/plan** will have indicated the **attitudes** formed by various **publics** and **audiences**. It is far easier to strengthen favourable opinions than it is to counteract hostile ones. **Attitudes** can be formed by several influences, including first-hand knowledge of a situation or **issue**, second-hand knowledge via the media and other formal communications, social conditioning and commonly held **beliefs**. There is a strong link between **beliefs**, **values** and **attitudes**. What one believes, or the **values** that one holds, will have a direct correlation with one's attitude towards a person, product, **issue** or organisation. However, it is important to acknowledge that **beliefs** are not necessarily 'true'; they are merely constructs and as such can be changed, thereby changing **attitudes** accordingly.

The main characteristics of **attitudes** and their formation is that they are:

- *learned* – through personal experience, through information provided by others or by exposure to the **mass media**;
- *predisposed* – a predisposition is a tendency towards something, so attitudes have motivational qualities;
- *linked to behaviour* – behaviour of **publics** is of primary interest to **public relations** practitioners;
- *consistent* – but not necessarily permanent;
- *directed towards an object and are reactions to that object* – for example a person may like 'x' but not 'y';
- *situationally determined* – a person may like a glass of wine with dinner, for example, but not with breakfast.

See **attitudes**, **beliefs**, **values**.

Cutlip, S. M., Centre, A. H. and Broom, G. M. (2000) *Effective Public Relations*, 8th edn. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Fishbein, M. (1973) 'The prediction of behaviour from attitudinal variables', in C. D. Mortenson and K. Sereno (eds) *Advances in Communication Research*. New York: Harper and Row.

Attribution theory

Attribution theory is concerned with the way in which people explain (attribute) the behaviour of others or themselves with something else. It looks at how individuals attribute causes to events and how this perception affects their motivation. The theory divides the factors into two types:

1. External or situational attribution assigns causality to an outside factor such as the weather or a traffic jam on the motorway.
2. Internal or dispositional attribution assigns causality to factors within people themselves, such as their competence or other variables which make the individual responsible for the event.

People often make self-serving attributions, so if something good happens they may attribute it to internal factors, whereas if something bad happens they often blame external factors. Attributions for events can alter a person's behaviour and many theories such as **cognitive dissonance** rely on it. Coombs (1998) used attribution theory to explain and predict people's perceptions of **crises** and the impact of **crises** on an organisation's **reputation**. There are three causal triggers which affect the development of attribution:

- *Stability* – this indicates whether an event happens frequently (stable) or infrequently (unstable). The more stable the event, the stronger the attributions of the individual's responsibility for an event.
- *External control* – this constitutes the extent to which an event is controlled by some outside factor. Stronger external control promotes attributions that the situation is responsible for the event.
- *Personal control* – this reflects a person's intentions and/or ability to control an event. Increased perceptions of personal control promote attributions of an individual's responsibility for the event.

Coombs, W. T. (1998) 'An analytic framework for crisis situations: Better responses from a better understanding of the situation', *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 10, 177–191.

Audience-profiling

Audience-profiling is the term given to the task of identifying the key characteristics of readers, viewers or listeners of either print

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or **broadcast media**. Information on profiles is gathered through **market research** and then used to target **marketing, advertising** or **public relations messages**.

See audience.

Audience

Audiences are made up of the groups of people or individuals to whom various **messages** about the organisation are communicated. In **public relations** terms they are called **publics**.

See publics.

Aware publics

Aware publics are a subset of an organisation's overall **publics**. They are groups of people who recognise that a **public relations** problem or **issue** exists. They may have read about it in the newspapers, seen the problem on television or have been told about it directly.

Awareness campaign

An awareness campaign is a **public relations** campaign designed to create awareness and knowledge about a product or service which may not necessarily result in sales. It is a method of introducing and educating the public about an **issue**, product or service.

See public relations programme/plan.

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