

THE SINGULARITY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ECOLOGY

Onofrei Vasilica*, Robu Alexandru Dragos* (coordinator)

* University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Agriculture, Aleea Mihail Sadoveanu nr. 3, Iași, 700490, Iași, România, e-mail: redactor_sef@yahoo.com

Abstract

The relevance and the objectivity of an analysis, no matter the field the object of the research heads for is given by its profoundness and the extent to which factors or elements that determined its evolution are identified. This study focuses on the specific manifestation of public relations in the field of sustainable development, environmental protection and ecology. We will demonstrate the diversity of the application areas of public relations, as well as the necessity of applying public relations in the field of environmental protection, sustainable development and ecology. This system exists and can occur both at a central and a local level, but there is needed a reconsideration, an introduction to the forefront of a new vision of public relations and their application. The environmental agents are called to resize or to center things more precisely so that they regain their full value, so that the role of public relations can gain new values.

In the context of a more and more obvious focus of many specialists from various fields on the problem of public relations, in a sort of appreciated and hope-giving frenzy, this study can support even modestly the effort of re- systematization of some points of view or clarify some aspects that are more difficult to get in touch with, sometimes because of objective reasons.

Key words: public relations, ecology, sustainable development, environmental protection

INTRODUCTION

Asserting and demonstrating the interference of public relations with various professions or fields (journalism, marketing, advertising, public affairs and lobby, etc.) has become almost a truism, but what remains imperative requires that relations between these areas should not be viewed simplistically, through a shallow analysis, but rather, in all their complexity, complexity conferred by all the socio-economic and cultural context itself. We live in an evolutive, complex society characterized by maximum instability. For which the need for safety, security and stability (symbolically transposed and found in the second stage of the famous pyramid of needs and motivations that control human actions, made by Abraham Maslow) is more acutely felt by individual, the need that determines through a cause-effect relation, the need for information.

In this context, public relations professionals have proven their utility in all the aspects of social life. Any organizational structure needs public relations, whether in private or public, whether it is profitable or not, whether it represents authority of government (government, parliament, ministries) or operates in areas such as: environmental protection, ecology,

education, social and health, cultural, military, religious, sports, art etc., whether it is a professional association or a union. Public relations provide those who remained unheard an opportunity to express themselves and submits to public debate subjects capable of making major changes in the society.

The diversity of contexts of application of public relations also derives from the very fact that excellence in this field implies diversity. The psychologist Karl Weick has developed the principle of needed variety, explaining why public relations departments should wholeheartedly opt for diversity. The principle determines that organizations should have as much variety - diversity - among employees, as there is in the environment in order to be able to interact more effectively with it. Good public relations departments turn to communication specialists from different cultural backgrounds and expect them to be multicultural communicators - practitioners who are open to communication with different people and have the ability to learn from them. Examples for that purpose are the multinationals that need diversity particularly in the departments of communication, in order to work more effectively.

Why it is important for an organization to seek the structures of public relations? - Just because it is part and should remain in the public sphere. It requires, however, a clear distinction between the public and the private sphere. Without getting into the details of this thorny distinctions, we say, subscribing to the characteristic notes highlighted also by Gheorghe-Ilie Fârte (Fârte et al, 2005-2006), that public space should have four required "ingredients":

- openness
- transparency
- exposure to other's assessments and
- exposure to different forms of regulation

All these four elements are present in the case of activities of organizations working in environmental protection but not in a family's life.

Therefore, the organization can not unreasonably block access of journalists in its area, is obliged to inform groups and institutions with whom it interacts about certain basic information (regarding the status of operation and organization or other elements), submits itself to judgment and evaluation of various individuals, groups or institutions (based on performance criteria) and operates within the limits imposed by certain constraints (professional, legal, moral, etc.). At the opposite end, a family's home represents an enclosed space (the access being conditioned by the approval of that family's members), in which no one is required to provide the others with specific information (about the habits, daily schedule) and

where - under normal conditions, daily life is neither assessed nor regulated from the outside.

The boundary between public and private space seems to have faded lately - under the influence of television broadcasts, for example, of the series "reality TV" like: "No comment", "Din Dagoste", "Schimb de Mame" etc. , under the scope of new communication technologies, under the impact of new patterns of behavior etc. However, we must be able to realize when we are in the public and when in the private area. At the same time, we will be able to decide where to perform activities of public relations and where not. Therefore, it becomes very clear that public relations can take place only in the public sphere, and not in the private one.

In the domain of communication sciences, the ethical and religious principle of respect for human dignity and recognition of the importance of human life involves qualitative valuing of information. The more a piece of information respects the dignity of the human being and influences positively the human life, the more valuable it is and the more valuable is to man, the higher it increases in quality, becoming truly powerful.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In the sociological research, through method are defined both the pursued objective and the strategy to address the studied issue. Typologically speaking, there are three groups of methods: exploratory research, descriptive research and causal research (Munteanu C. et al, 2001).

Exploratory research is recommended when the information regarding the investigated phenomenon is rather limited and it is necessary to look to the existing situation. *Descriptive research* has the role to deepen the analysis of the problem to be investigated, if the ambiguities have been reduced enough to enable the formulation of hypotheses. *Experimental research* (causal), more rigorous, involves both verification of the assumptions and the deepening of knowledge by manipulating causal variables.

The central position (Teodorescu Gh et.al, 2005-2006) that the questionnaire holds in a survey of opinion, demonstrates the special qualities of this instrument and the sociological survey as "royal technique" of collecting primary data about a certain reality.

I took as an example the communication policy of an organization, in order to clarify further the elements specific to the practice of public relations in the area of environmental protection, sustainable development and ecology. My choice was S.C. Bioma Agro Ecology Co S.R.L. in Iasi, where I worked personally and with which I still collaborate very well.

Answers useful for us and for you

1 How did you hear Bioma company?
 media
 Internet
 fairs / exhibitions sale
 Other sources

2 What Geolife range products you use?
 an environmental protection
 an organic agriculture
 a From the organic livestock
 one of the food industry
 I didn't used any product

3 How would Geolife range products?
 a very good
 an Expensive
 I am not interested
 I didn't used any product, but I would like to use
 I don't know

The following answers will help us process the information that you have the courtesy to provide us with it so far:
 Education: Occupation

Gender: F M

Age: under 25 years 26-35 years
 36-45 over 45

Thank you!

Fig. 1 Questionnaire: Answers useful for us and for you

In order to draw out some of the most significant and comprehensive aspects related to the management of the relation with the customers and their opinion concerning the ecological products in the Geolife range, the questionnaire form figure 1 was conceived.

The questionnaire was distributed between February 23rd- April 15th, to a sample group of 1000 people coming from different environments: on the web site of the firm, on line-613 respondents, in printed format during two distance learning courses from University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Agriculture in Iasi-87 respondents, and during a specific sale organized in Iasi, - 300 respondents.

For the second study, regarding the organizational communication processes (conducted in May-June 2010, out of 20 people) I chose the set of questions validated by the questionnaire (Gallup) in table 1, to which I added a question referring to the professional success factors and five questions related to the communication behavior of the supervisor, trust in the colleagues and the degree of satisfaction concerning their job.

A. Rank the following factors in order of importance for professional success (numbers from 1-8): <input type="checkbox"/> appearance <input type="checkbox"/> will <input type="checkbox"/> work <input type="checkbox"/> destiny <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligence <input type="checkbox"/> State support <input type="checkbox"/> support relatives <input type="checkbox"/> talent <input type="checkbox"/> Other						
B. Mark extent of agreement or disagreement with the following statements regarding your post.						
Sl. No.	Statements	Disagree Total 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agreement 4	Total Agreement 5
1.	know clearly what is expected of me in terms of results.					
2.	I have to learn equipment, materials and information needed to do my job properly.					
3.	every day I have the opportunity to do what they know best to do.					
4.	In the last seven days, I was praised and rewarded for what they have done well in my work.					
5.	my boss seems to care about me as a person, not just as an employee.					
6.	there is someone in company that encourages me to develop myself, to progress.					
7.	My opinions seem to count in the company I work for.					
8.	mission and values promoted by the company I can feel that my work is important.					
9.	my fellow service advocate quality work.					
10.	between colleagues have a very good friend.					
11.	In the last six months, I talked to someone who work in company about my progress professional					
12.	Last year, I had the opportunity to learn and develop myself in my work.					
13.	my boss is always willing to communicate openly and honestly with subordinates, including me.					
14.	my boss is willing to listen carefully whenever you bring up the service issues that bother me.					
15.	my boss informed me of the time on new programs, measures and regulations introduced in the company.					
16.	I trust the information they receive service from my co-workers.					
17.	I am satisfied with my job.					
C.1. Circle the correct options:						
Sex	Age	Level of studies	Experience in the field	The seniority in company		
a. male	a. under 25 years b. 26-35 years	a. highschool b. colegiu c. faculty d. master. e. PhD f. Other	a. than 1 year c. 4-5 years b. 1-3 years d. 6-10 years e. 11-20 years f. than 20 years	a. less than one year b. 1-3 years c. over 4 years		
b. female	c. 36-45 years d. over 45 years					
C.2. Profession.....						

Fig. 2 Questionnaire Internal communication - an obvious necessity

RESULTS AND DISSCUSIONS

The result of the study concerning the impact of internal communication on organizational performance (the firm) also revealed two major connections: the nature and the quality of the communications between the manager and the employees correlates positively with the performances of the group (the organization), and the way the employees perceive the quality of the managerial and organizational communication correlates positively with their ability of carrying on their duties.

In other words, in terms of communication, the organizational performance depends on the degree of adequacy of the communication to the groups' characteristics and the group's objectives and on the way the group members perceive the quality of this adequacy.

Speaking about the study concerning the management of the relation with the clients, this one showed a god communication and transmission of information from the firm towards the public. The opinion of the clients or of the potential clients regarding the ecological products in Geolige range can reflect this efficiency in communication, as well as the quality of the treatments: 61.3% of the respondents evaluated the products as being very good, 15%- expensive, 11. 2% of the respondents had not yet used any product, but would have liked to use them, 10%- did not know about the

Geolife range and 2.5 were not interested. It is true that the products are expensive, but this is compensated by the high price of the ecological agri-food obtained. For example, at present, ecologically certified wine, which is very expensive compared to common wines, is highly demanded in France and in other western countries.

When it comes to ecological farming, usually, the absence of chemical treatment is inferred. This absence is reflected in the decreasing productivity, plant disease, as well as a poor quality of fruit, vegetables. This is why, fruit, vegetables which have distinct features and effects without having been chemically treated, are considered “luxurious”, phenomena which is reflected in the selling price.

For these reasons, when internationally recognized ecological agriculture is practiced, getting an internal or external subsidy and the registration of the producer at an ecological certification body are absolutely necessary. In Europe, people are very keen on ecological agricultural and agri-food products, and this is why, even if the prices are high, in the medium and long term, the investment becomes very profitable. More and more practitioners in this field began to choose ecological products instead of the chemical ones which are quite expensive and have very serious effects in time, on the soil and on the quality of the crops (diseases, fungus, soil disequilibrium).

It is also nice to see that most of the respondents who proved to appreciate the ecological products are an average age of 36-45 years old-57.09%; 17.94%-between 23-35 years old, 14.58%-over 45 years old and 10.27%-under 25 years old. At the same time, only 14.19% of the participants who appreciated the ecological products were professionally related, working in different fields (agriculture, zoo technics, environmental protection). As to the rest, 85.81% of the respondents have different academic backgrounds and professions, most of them still being intellectuals. The efficacy of the communication and public relations instruments used within the firm was also reflected through the results obtained after having administered the questionnaires. Thereby, they revealed a good positioning of the firm in the public opinion: 57% of the respondents found out about Bioma firm from the mass-media, 26%- from sales/ shows, 15%-from the internet, 2%- other sources.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed at systematizing the existing points of view concerning public relations, in general, as a form of public communication, respectively, related exclusively to the public field. Information and answers were offered to questions such as: To what extent the public relations’

functions and objectives, exist according to the characteristics of the expression of agents in the field of environmental protection, sustainable development, ecology ? Our answer was a positive one, revealing the multitude of similar elements between the two structures analyzed.

Once some differences such as the one between the public area and the private area have been explained, we insisted on the importance and the need that the ecological agents should get in contact with the public relations structures. One of the conclusions refers precisely to the idea of their remaining within the public area, in order to practice the role of ecology in the world and not only considering fashion or because of inertia.

The ecological crisis that we are experiencing today is first of all a spiritual and moral crisis. It is not determined by the things or the historical context, nor by science or technology. It is determined by man. As it is known ecology studies the relations between the environment and the self-functioning of the nature as a whole. Nature does not have anything extra and does not lack anything. If nowadays there is something missing in nature, this is only because of man. Man has brutally interfered with the natural order of things and provoked unnatural changes. He has promoted utilitarianism in relation to the world and eliminated nature and the environment. He was no more interested in natural world and its natural beauty, remaining stranger with no home in an artificial world built by himself. Ecological crisis awareness led to a lot of social and political mobilizations. Among these there are the ecological movements and the ecologists' parties, whose main aim is the environmental protection. There is almost no political party not to include in its political platform an action plan for fighting the ecological crisis. But, in these declarations and programs the ecological crisis is dealt with superficially, while its roots are much deeper and spread. The fight against the ecological crisis should not be understood as a general and abstract question. It is not something that people or the mankind are concerned with randomly, but as individuals and as a whole. If man is not aware of his personal responsibility for the crisis that exists inside and around him, he cannot deal appropriately with the ecological crisis. But, the problem of being aware is not only a question of personal sensitivity but also of education. Ecology prevents us and looks for developing a new type of consciousness, as we lack the natural human consciousness. Our attention is drawn on the fact that man is part of nature and that he has to fit in with it, it teaches us that we should not act in nature, that we should not intervene in order to modify nature until we understand its structure and functionality. This is why there is an absolute need of developing an ecological awareness, which can be built only based on an ecological morality and ecological culture.

The analysis of the results obtained after the administration of the questionnaires aimed to emphasize the differences between the individual perceptions concerning the communication within the firm, and, furthermore, to emphasize the differences at the level of the groups within certain organizations, this way I tested the hypothesis according to which communication improvement techniques cannot be applied to all the cases, but have to be limited to the needs and the context in which each group works.

However, in the last resort, we believe that the relevance and the utility of this paper also depends on the extent to which it will contribute to the improvement of diverging discussions, being at least a landmark and the embodiment of some concrete ample actions specific to the public relations area, in order for it to be brought to life, and also to be unquestionable in the ecological field.

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