

PR isn't really so scandalous

Defining and exploring different forms of public relations

By Alexia Johnson

Her face is determined as she walks into rooms to avert crises and preserve her client's public image; Olivia Pope is what many people may imagine public relations professionals to be like. She goes to great lengths to achieve a goal, like having her team perform some illegal acts or going against moral beliefs. While Olivia Pope serves as a slightly exaggerated form of a PR professional, much of what she does can be attributed to a form of public relations: crisis management. Although Olivia Pope's 'version' of what public relations is seems more scandalous, this does not accurately describe the industry.



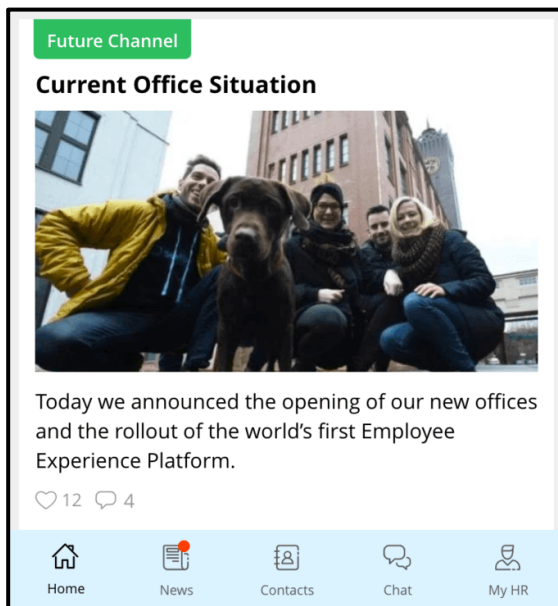
Olivia Pope plans for and averts crises by performing ample research on her clients and their publics and remaining media conscious.

What is public relations

According to the Public Relations Society of America, [public relations may be defined as](#) “a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.” This is my favorite definition of public relations, not only because it comes from a reputable organization, but because it emphasizes the two most important aspects of it: strategic communication and mutually beneficial relationships.

Focusing on strategic communications shows that every decision is planned and the options are weighed. Building mutually beneficial relationships shows that although the discipline of PR is focused on planning and strategy, it has a human aspect to it, therefore separating PR from other disciplines, like marketing, that focus on selling and promoting services.

Personally, one of the more underrepresented yet beneficial aspects of PR is internal communications. “Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques” refers to employees as “important publics.” There are many different organizations that have written about the importance of communication the people within the organization. StaffBase, which is a secure employee application focused on internal communications, says that an important reason for



StaffBase is an internal communications tool; this is a photo of its interface and how it can be used.

[internal communication](#) is to increase employee morale and consequently, maintain brand promise.

Why is it valuable?

5wPR, a PR firm based in New York, wrote a [blog post](#) defining public relations and its importance. PR increases the credibility of the organization and therefore also increases profits and sales. Public relations also positively affects the organization's online presence; this is necessary in a world where everything is now digital and everybody is trying to break through the clutter. For different aspects of public relations, there are different benefits — much like internal communication's benefits of increased employee drive.

An organization that shows the value of PR

A personal favorite for an organization that showed how public relations can truly shine is Johnson & Johnson's handling of the [PR crisis in 1982](#). When it was discovered that people were dying after taking pills that were tampered with, J&J's PR Director created a plan in which the organization responded immediately and honestly. Numerous case studies have been performed on this response and it has since become a paramount example of how to handle crises.

For myself, public relations proves its efficacy over and over. It works to ensure that employees know that they are valued through clear internal communication; it also maintains the company's reputation in the public. This multifaceted discipline truly shows the importance of excellent communication and strong, mutually beneficial relationships.

About Alexia Johnson



Alexia Johnson is a senior majoring in public relations at the University of North Texas. She is skilled with PR writing and is heavily interested in performing research for companies. She aspires to work in a public relations agency as a PR or social media specialist.

References

Screenshot of Scandal from the television show

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