

# Welcome to Top Mark PR Professional

This course is intended for those who have little or no experience of the subject matter, either starting up a business, or voluntary group, or having worked for a while without having to deal with Public Relations.

To help you understand what PR is about and how it works, as well as practical applications, you will come across a number of challenging questions, and Unit Assessments. The principles have been illustrated with as many examples as possible. You'll find them highlighted. By the time you have completed the course, you'll also have drafted a PR plan and have written a feature and a press release.

## Objectives of Top Mark PR Professional

In the sequence of six units you are going to cover the following topics:

- What is public relations?
- Who are your publics?
- The difference between PR and advertising
- How to identify a good story
- Dealing with a crisis - it could happen to you
- How to write a press release
- Writing a headline that grabs attention
- When a picture is worth a thousand words
- Mechanics of a press release - the do's and don'ts
- Techniques for radio and TV

Experience has shown that this course will take about 14 hours to complete. Don't be concerned if it takes you longer than this average time.



## Unit 1

## What is Public Relations?

This Unit looks at:

1. What is PR?
2. Who are your publics?
3. The difference between PR and advertising - editorial versus advertorial
4. Planning
5. Building relationships with the press

What is PR?

“PR is about reputation: the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. PR practice is the discipline which looks after reputation - with the aim of earning understanding and support, and influencing opinions and behaviour.

It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics”. (Institute of Public Relations)

The use of public relations can be very powerful, as people can be influenced in many different ways, especially if the influence is not directly apparent.

You can make this course more practical if you think of a real business or organisation, and then use that as the context for your exercises.

Who are your publics?

Question 1

Time guide: 5 min.

Who do you think your publics are? Please list at least three of them.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Publics include customers or potential customers, suppliers, staff, neighbours, competitors, shareholders and influencers, e.g. the media.



## Customers and potential customers

You want your customers and potential customers to read good things about you and to believe good things about the image of you, your organisation or the company which is your client.

## Suppliers

You want your suppliers to believe that you are a reputable company to deal with, that you will pay your bills on time, and that you are growing and therefore they will grow too.

## Staff

You want your staff to know where you are going with the company, how you are tackling difficult problems, how you are coping with success, and how their jobs are going to be more secure. They do not exist in isolation, they are part of families and social groups, and what they say about your company and your products works as public relations in itself.

## Neighbours

People and organisations near your premises develop a perception about you, your company/club, or organisation. For example, the residents near your local school regularly complain about parent's careless parking, or noisy children leaving litter as they come out of school.

## Competitors

Bearing in mind that you cannot always control how much information competitors have collected about you, they have to be seen as a public as well. Therefore anything which gives them ammunition to devalue your company or products, should be managed very carefully.

Example: In the recent court case between British Airways and Virgin Atlantic, Virgin proved that British Airways were hijacking their high net-worth customers, and offering them incentives to travel British Airways.

## Shareholders

Many companies run specialist briefing sessions for City Analysts, to encourage them to value particular shares. Some of the privatised companies have had lively shareholders' meetings, when actions carried out by the company have not been approved by a shareholders' group.

## Influencers



The media, the government, charitable organisations, while they may not be customers, can influence the perception of your customers.

Think about how the media influenced people towards carrying organ donor cards following the 6-year-old child who received a heart transplant.

The difference between PR and advertising – editorial versus advertorial

PR and advertising

PR is what you have persuaded other people to say about you, whereas advertising is paid for, by you, to proclaim a specific message.

Editorial and advertorial

Editorial is when you have issued a press release, and they publish it, preferably with as few cuts or changes as possible.

Advertorials are paid advertisements in the media that resemble an editorial or story.

In a recent study, using editorial as a base of 100, ads scored 46, while advertorials scored 81. Readers didn't realise they were reading anything different from editorial, when they were looking at an advertorial.

Building relationships with the press

Identify the key media

It is important to identify the key media, whether they are local, national, trade or financial. Check regularly the names and spellings and titles of all the journalists you are writing to.

- **Local press** tackle the publics which are your neighbours, perhaps your employees, some of your suppliers, some of your customers.
- The **national press** tackle again, depending on the size of your organisation, different publics, perhaps including stock market analysts.
- The **trade press** are read by your customers, and your employees, and are an excellent opportunity for trade or technical press releases and features.
- **Financial press** are essential when looking at the corporate structure of the company or where there is stock market potential.

