Public relations is difficult to define. Here we will look at how different organisations have attempted to do so, but most simply it is the strategic management of communication. It is used by every type of organisation, including commercial companies, charities and political parties.

In the UK, PR began to be used by commercial companies after 1945. Before this it was mainly used as a propaganda and government information tool during the First World War, and then more extensively in the Second World War. During the 1980s there was a growth in PR firms and the stereotype from that time seems to resonate the most with people outside the industry. PR is still in a stage of rapid development: as modern media channels change and develop, so the manner of communicating using them must also change. As business changes, the role of PR within business changes, with most large corporations using PR internally for their own employees and externally for their goods and services.
1 What is public relations?

It is important to start by defining what PR actually is. Some people would regard it as the promotion of a company, or how to get celebrities to come to promotional events; some would describe it simply as ‘spin’ or propaganda. While there is an element of truth in these definitions, the definition of PR needs to be wide-ranging. Consider that companies come in all shapes and sizes from charities and small businesses to large multinationals, and also that people in the public eye from celebrities to politicians to business people need to manage their reputations.

Definitions

When coming up with a definition, it is helpful to look at several different sources to try to reach an understanding of what PR is.

To start with we will look at how the industry defines itself.

The Public Relations Consultants Association (PRCA)

‘Public relations is all about reputation. It’s the result of what you do, what you say, and what others say about you. It is used to gain trust and understanding between an organisation and its various publics – whether that’s employees, customers, investors, the local community – or all of those stakeholder groups. Public relations professionals use many different techniques as part of their PR campaigns. From media relations and lobbying, to speaking at conferences, to online viral campaigns, to sponsorship – and more. PR is not always about short-term campaigns, such as product launches. It can encompass longer-term strategic aims, such as brand building and working with local communities.’ (PRCA, 2012)

The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR)

‘Public relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics.’ (CIPR, 2012)

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)

‘Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their publics.’ (PRSA, 2012)

PR is also the subject of academic research. One of the leading academics on the subject is Jacquie L’Etang, who gives the following definition:

‘Public relations is the occupation responsible for the management of organisational relationships and reputation. It encompasses issues management, public affairs, corporate communications, stakeholder relations, risk communication and corporate social responsibility. Public relations operates on behalf of many different types of organisation both
at governmental and corporate level, to small business and voluntary sectors. Public relations arises at points of societal change and resistance.’


It is clear that despite being in the business of communication, the PR industry can sometimes find it difficult to communicate exactly what it does; one of the reasons for this is that PR is wide-ranging in scope and is used in different ways by different organisations. In the next section we will begin to explore what some of these ways are.

Activity
1. Compare your original definition with the definitions above. Are there any similarities?
2. Can you draw comparisons between the various definitions?

2 What public relations is not

In defining PR it is also helpful to have a clear idea of what it is not, as it is a discipline that is often confused with, for example, marketing or advertising. So how does PR differentiate itself from these activities?

Marketing

The marketing mix consists of the 4Ps – product, place, price and promotion. As promotion is a core concept in this mix, marketing is the discipline PR is most often confused with, and this is not entirely incorrect. Indeed PR makes up an aspect of promotion, although it is not limited to this context.

In the marketing mix, promotion involves using a set of tools to communicate the features and benefits of a business’s products and services to its customers. These tools include:

- personal selling
- advertising
- direct marketing
- PR
- sales promotions.

We can see that PR is not simply promotion; in fact some practitioners call this type of PR marketing public relations (MPR) to help define the two disciplines and think of PR as planning strategic communications.

The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) views PR in the context of an organisation’s customers. This is of some use, but does not take into account the other ‘publics’ that PR most often serves.

How marketing and PR are developed within an organisation depends very much on the type of organisation. Large commercial organisations historically have had large marketing departments with smaller PR departments sitting alongside them,
whereas organisations which depend on information about stakeholder views, such as political or charitable organisations, will have more dominant PR functions.

**Advertising**

There is one difference immediately clear between advertising and PR – advertising involves paying for coverage in the form of an advert, be it on television, the radio, in the press or on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, while PR does not.

Advertising is called an *above-the-line marketing activity* as payment is made for the space that the advert takes up. *Below-the-line marketing activities* include all other methods such as competitions, direct marketing, media and PR, where the activity is paid for according to how much time it takes to undertake the project. PR often works on a fee basis when it is not organised in-house, so it is important that you learn to plan and manage your workload carefully. If you work for a PR consultancy you will usually be asked to fill in a timesheet on a daily basis, showing how much time you have allocated to each client and activity.

However, as with marketing, the divide between PR and advertising is not always clear-cut. For example, in the case of an *advertorial* we see that the space is bought in a publication in much the same way as for an advert. However, the advertorial is placed alongside editorial content and written to look as if it is part of the edited publication (although it will state somewhere that it is an advertorial). The text will usually have been written by someone in the PR department who understands the brand values and is aware of the message the company wants to give.

This device is often used in women’s magazines to build brand awareness for products while aligning them with the readers’ interests. Some publications will offer the services of a journalist to write advertorial copy; in this instance the journalist and PR department must work closely together to ensure the content communicates all the points the organisation is trying to achieve. In other organisations the PR department may hire the services of a freelance journalist whose writing style best fits that of the publication they are targeting.

A good PR professional will be aware of the work of the journalists who work in the same field as them. Knowing who these journalists are, what their professional interests are and what news stories will most interest them is a key part of media relations.

**Activity**

Find three advertorials in different publications. Ask yourself the following questions.

- Was it clear in the publications you looked at which were advertorials and which were editorials?
- Can you clearly tell what campaigns have been paid for on Facebook and other social media sites?
- Do the answers to the above two questions matter – and why?
Sponsorship

Sponsorship is another activity that overlaps with other disciplines. It is an above-the-line (paid for) activity and so is often considered to be a mainstream marketing activity. However, as sponsorship is about communicating your company message and aligning it with the event – for example, a sports event, festival or arts event, or an awards ceremony, competition, charitable cause or educational sponsorship – this falls under the heading of PR. Sponsorship is mentioned here as it overlaps with both marketing and advertising and will be explored further on page 17.

Human Resources

Internal PR has clear overlaps with human resources (HR), and in fact many of the activities within internal corporate communications have traditionally been carried out by the human resources department (see page 9 for more on internal communications).

However, as organisations have grown in size, and as HR has itself grown and developed as a specialist industry, so modern HR managers have recognised the need to work in partnership with strategic communication professionals to achieve their joint long-term aims.

3 What does public relations do, and why is it important?

A key question for PR professionals is what does PR actually achieve? It is not usually as easy to quantify as a marketing promotion, where you can measure an uplift in sales. Its aims are also often fairly intangible as it is difficult to assess the management of reputation, or whether or not a campaign has ‘raised awareness’.

The answer to the above is in evaluating your campaign. Figure 2.1.1 shows a brief overview of that process.

**Activity**
Can you think of a sponsored event that you have been to – what message was the brand trying to communicate to you?

**Key terms**

- **Human resources (HR)** – the professional discipline and business function that oversees an organisation’s workforce.
- **Evaluating** – measuring the impact of something, such as a PR campaign.

**Link**
You can find more about PR campaigns in Unit 9: Delivering and evaluating public relations campaigns.

**Figure 2.1.1: Evaluation techniques**
PR professionals evaluate their campaigns so that they can be accountable to clients or the organisation they work for and so that they can demonstrate how they have contributed to successful outcomes for their organisation. It is increasingly important that PR professionals evaluate correctly, as when the economy is struggling, it is vital that you can prove your campaign is working.

But what are you evaluating? As we have discussed already, and will do in more depth in section 4 (pages 8–9), PR is a wide-ranging tool that can offer many benefits, such as the following.

- **A favourable image for your company or brand** – if your organisation has a ‘favourable’ image, you will find it easier to attract and retain both staff and customers. A good example of this in the UK is the John Lewis Partnership, which many people believe would be a good and fair company to work for and whose brand name as a department store has high levels of customer loyalty. An additional benefit to having a positive message about your organisation is that staff will have an increased feeling of well-being about their workplace; studies have shown this will have a positive effect on their productivity.

When customers have a wide choice, they will often choose the ‘brand’ they most closely associate with. This is being fostered through PR tactics such as brand experiences and brand management programmes.

- **Successful and sustained communication** – a good PR strategy will ensure that you are utilising all available media channels – such as national or regional media, websites and social media campaigns, **internal newsletters** and posters, or events and **seminars** – in a consistent manner and with a consistent message. By doing this you help ensure that the organisation achieves recognition and credibility; this will in turn help to create a favourable image for your organisation or brand.

- **Maintaining goodwill** – organisations that keep their public fully informed, even during negative periods, can help to maintain a feeling of goodwill towards that company. For example, in June 2012, NatWest Bank had a computing error that led to many people not being able to access their money for many days. The bank went to great lengths to telephone, text and put out press statements to let customers know what had happened, what they would do to resolve it and how customers would be compensated should they have built up bank charges in this period. Therefore, despite the bad news, most NatWest Bank customers remained loyal and NatWest took control of the news story.

- **Maximising investment in other marketing and advertising activities** – finally, as we have seen on pages 3–5, PR crosses over with other activities. A combined promotion of the same message across all activities will maximise any budget spent, and a consistent and strong message will be felt by the public.

It is important to remember that every communication you or your organisation has with a stakeholder will leave an impression. Sometimes it is small, but these impressions build up over time and they can make or destroy reputations.

PR is key to the overall company or brand’s success and helps to improve its commercial relationships.
Case study: Innocent’s Big Knit Campaign

Innocent smoothie was launched in 1999, and is the number one smoothie brand in the UK. They sell over two million smoothies each week across a range of national and independent outlets.

In 2003 Innocent started to run the ‘Big Knit Campaign’ where a host of volunteers and Innocent staff members knitted little woolly hats to sit on top of the smoothie bottles in sales displays. For each of the special smoothie bottles bought, Innocent donated a percentage of the profits to Help the Aged and Age Concern (now Age UK). In 2009, after running the campaign for five years, the team brought in an outside consultancy, Frank PR.

What did Frank PR do?

Frank PR’s creative idea was to re-record the 1980s hit ‘There’s No One Quite Like Grandma’ by St Winifred’s School Choir, using as many of the original choir as they could get. Additionally they asked the actress June Whitfield (from Absolutely Fabulous) to appear in the video of the song. Graham Godkin of Frank PR explained that they felt the single was cult-like and tongue-in-cheek, which fitted well with the corporate messages from Innocent that appear on their packaging and website.

The campaign was a success. In terms of media coverage, the single secured television coverage on The Alan Titchmarsh Show and on This Morning. There were double page spreads in the Daily Mail, The Express and The Telegraph. The Breakfast Show on BBC’s Radio 1 made it the song of the week and so played it daily, and the video went viral across social media networks. You can find the video from this campaign at www.youtube.com.

Activity

1. When looking at the Innocent campaign, you can easily identify two positive outcomes – who were these for?
2. What media coverage is mentioned in the case study? Why are these items counted as ‘good’ coverage?
3. Apart from the immediate outcomes, what are the longer-term benefits of this campaign?
4. How do you think these outcomes may be evaluated?
4 Specialisms within public relations

As PR has such a broad remit, practitioners have built up specialisms within the discipline – **Table 2.1.1** shows some of the most common.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialism</th>
<th>What they do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Branding</strong></td>
<td>A successful brand is seen as a long-term strategic asset with customers often willing to pay a premium for it – for example, good-quality non-branded aertex polo shirts can be bought for £5 but branded shirts may retail for around £70. Jack Wills has created their brand through the use of <strong>brand ambassadors</strong> and <strong>brand experiences</strong> – they used PR skills to get customers to <strong>engage</strong> with the brand both online and offline, and formed a strong community of consumers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issues management</strong></td>
<td>This is very closely linked to crisis management. It identifies potential future issues (or threats in a business <strong>SWOT</strong> analysis) and develops a communications strategy, and builds relationships with key influencers in order to help avert them. If the issues are not averted they may become crises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crisis management</strong></td>
<td>Many different crises affect companies, such as Barclays Bank and the fixing of the LIBOR rate, or BP and the Gulf of Mexico oil spillage. These companies employed a crisis management programme (with varying degrees of success) when responding to these crises. Crisis management is a structured approach/plan put in place to help minimise the risk of misinformation around a crisis and help with overall damage limitation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stakeholder management</strong></td>
<td>PR needs to form ongoing two-way communication with <strong>stakeholders</strong> to build long-term, stable relationships that help to ensure any conflict in the relationship between organisation and stakeholder is effectively dealt with. This is increasingly called stakeholder engagement as it sees stakeholders as partners in the organisation and its decisions. Again there are close links with issues management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public affairs</strong></td>
<td>The success of some businesses depends heavily upon decisions made by the government of the day. Public affairs practitioners work in line with legislation and governmental regulations, and liaise with organisation stakeholders to help an organisation’s aims. Working within public affairs may also involve political lobbying to change certain regulations in favour of their industries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media relations strategy planning</strong></td>
<td>Traditional media platforms are changing – most obviously the decline in print readership of newspapers and periodicals and the increase in online content – so the way PR professionals target the media also has to change. Now you must strategically plan your campaign and how you will target the media to ensure satisfactory coverage. You must plan for both reach and credibility online and offline – you should identify who is the <strong>key influencer</strong> for your target market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reputation management</strong></td>
<td>Reputation management deals with how an organisation’s personality is expressed to the public. This is as important for a company such as Nike, which is always keen to manage any stories that appear about its supply chain process in the creation of its shoes, as it is to Greenpeace, which uses global PR to let the public know about its work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Continued on next page*
Unit 2: Understanding public relations

2.1: Understand the purpose of public relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialism</th>
<th>What they do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporate social responsibility (CSR)</td>
<td>Strategic planning and communications is at the heart of CSR. A PR professional will research the best-fit social strategy for the organisation that delivers a long-term social impact and will help to build relationships with the organisation’s stakeholders. CSR has a large impact on company reputation and therefore reputation management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal communications</td>
<td>In the last 20 years there has been a marked increase in internal PR as organisations seek to manage their workplace and industrial relations more effectively. North America has led the way in this, where it is now often termed employee communication. There are several reasons for the need for internal communications: • meeting legal obligations – safety rules, terms of employment, disciplinary procedures, etc. • helping to support major change within the organisation • helping to retain good staff. The psychologist Herzberg suggested that relationships with supervisors or peers are significant motivation factors for employees • explaining the direction of the company. Communicating effectively the performance, strategy and priorities of the company helps staff to see their part in a large organisation and encourages them to work harder and/or more effectively • creating staff unity – this is particularly useful in multinational companies where staff can feel very distant from each other, despite the technology available for virtual meetings. There may well also be cultural misunderstandings, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event planning</td>
<td>While many smaller-scale events are run in-house, for larger-scale events an event management specialist will be brought in. Their job is to manage every aspect of the design and production of the event, from research to evaluation. Some event specialists will specialise further into events, such as business and corporate events or exhibition management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media expert</td>
<td>From setting up viral campaigns to managing web 2.0 programmes such as Twitter, Facebook and Pinterest accounts to blogger outreach, the internet and social media have transformed the relationship between members of the public and PR professionals who want to connect with them. Social media has developed its own experts but strategic communication is still at the heart of what they do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Legal constraints in public relations

PR professionals need to be aware of the law and how it relates to their practice. You are not expected to be a legal expert, but you should have a working knowledge of various aspects of the law.

**Intellectual property**

In the UK, four types of intellectual property are protected:

1. copyright (©)
2. trademarks (™)
3. designs
4. patents.

**Links**

For more on crisis management, see Unit 16: Understanding the use of public relations in issues and crisis management.

For more on stakeholder management, see Unit 13: Developing working relationships with colleagues and stakeholders.

**Activity**

Research online to find PR consultancies that offer specialist departments for each of the specialisms mentioned in Table 2.1.1.

**Key term**

**Web 2.0** – the second generation of websites or web presence offering a degree of interactivity and features such as social media, news feeds, video clips and multimedia.
It is important in PR that it is your intellectual property, i.e. the ideas you create, that clients are buying from you.

Copyright has the most immediate impact on the PR professional from two different perspectives. You must of course not infringe someone else’s copyright by using their work without permission, but additionally you should protect your own. Copyright law is very complex, and it is important to remember that copyright laws may be different in different countries. If you are working on a multinational project you must make yourself familiar with the laws of the country in which you will be operating.

**Protecting your own copyright**

Copyright protects various different media from writing to video footage – in fact a promotional video or vodcast may well have numerous copyrights owned by different people. For example, the organisation’s logo will have been designed by a freelance designer who may hold the copyright, the music in the video may be copyright protected by the composer and the words by the songwriter, the video images may be protected by the filmmaker, and the script may be protected by the writer – so with five people holding a claim to the copyright of their individual pieces, how does the project become workable?

There are two ways to use your copyright. You can assign it, which means you sell that piece of work and have no further right to use it, or you can license it. In this case you retain the copyright but you allow someone else to use it as well, and this is the most common way for PR professionals to utilise their copyright. Licences can be defined – for example, you can stipulate that work can only be used in a certain way or in certain publications. If licensing your work, you need to be sure the licence is defined in the way you would wish.

This links to ownership of copyright. You are the owner if you create the work. However, if you work for an organisation they are the owner of the work you create while in their employ, although this is not true if you are a freelance contractor. Freelance contracts will set out whether copyright will be assigned or licensed and the terms of a contract can be negotiated.

**Defamation/libel law**

Defamation law places restrictions on what we are able to say about other individuals or organisations. It is used when it can be shown that criticism was levelled at a person or organisation that was undeserving of it, and it caused significant harm to some aspect of their life or business.

Defamation takes two forms – libel and slander. Slander is generally used to refer to defamation through speech, whereas libel involves a lasting publication of the defamatory/negative comments.

It is not always the case that saying something negative about an individual or organisation is illegal; if you can prove that what you are saying is the truth, that is a good defence. It is imperative that you abide by the PR industry code of ethics and ensure the truth is represented in all communications.
Bribery law

The Bribery Act 2010 came into force in July 2011 and creates the following offences.

1. Active bribery: promising or giving a financial or other advantage.
2. Passive bribery: agreeing to receive or accepting a financial or other advantage.
4. The failure of commercial organisations to prevent bribery by an associated person (corporate offence).

PR professionals were concerned that the Bribery Act would outlaw the offer of hospitality or entertainment for clients. However, all it has done is enable a more ethical way of working.

Hospitality, entertainment and corporate gifts are still seen as being reasonable business practices as long as they are proportionate and not too lavish. It is acceptable to take journalists on overseas press trips only if there is an obvious link to the product you want to demonstrate when you get there. The timing of hospitality or gifts is also significant. It would not, for example, be acceptable to present gifts to a potential client when pitching for business, but would be acceptable if you win that client to give them a seasonal gift.

Privacy law

Privacy law impacts upon PR practice in several areas. It could be relevant if you are managing the reputation of a high-profile client and trying to keep them out of the media spotlight, or when wanting to use an internal training video picturing employees. In fact it is the second aspect of the law that a PR professional will more frequently encounter. If you utilise a picture of an employee taken at an organisational event in a company newsletter, then you can argue that the picture was taken with that purpose in mind for a limited audience. If, however, the picture was so good you want to use it with media outlets, then the person in the picture has the right to privacy. You do not have the immediate right to distribute that picture without written consent from the employee involved.

Privacy law also applies when dealing with minors. Information and images of children must be kept secure. Children are not able to consent to information and images of themselves being used in any context. You must obtain permission from their parent or legal guardian if you need to use information and images of children.

If you feel that you need to invade the privacy of another in order to achieve your communications strategy, you should consider your code of professional ethics very carefully.
FSA regulations

The Financial Services Authority (FSA) is an independent non-governmental body that regulates all financial markets in the UK. While it does not have directives on PR activity, it is concerned with transparency of communication – when it acts in this manner it is also known as the UK Listing Agency (UKLA).

From a consumer perspective the FSA regulates firms advertising and promoting financial products or services; they must make sure their promotions are fair, clear and not misleading. Promotions can include PR aspects such as leaflets or posters, promotional literature or websites where the regulation states that you must not make misleading claims, nor fail to set out clearly the key risks of the financial product, nor use data to create unrealistic expectations for financial returns.

Take it further
Visit the FSA’s website and read about their financial promotions at www.fsa.gov.uk/Pages/Doing/Regulated/Promo/index.shtml.

ABPI regulations

The ABPI is the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry. It controls how pharmaceutical companies (and their PR teams) promote medicines to health professionals in the UK as well as the information they can provide about prescription-only drugs.

The code lays out guidelines for:
- gift giving, meetings and hospitality spends
- how many samples of a product may be sent out over a year and to whom
- how promotional material can be approved.

6 Key public relations tactics

A tactic is a relatively short-term tool that you utilise to meet the long-term strategies of your PR plan. Key tactics used in a campaign will change depending on both the target audience and what the strategy of your campaign is. Before you decide what to use, you should first ask yourself the following questions.

- Who are our target markets?
- What are they most interested in?
- What is the best way to reach them?
- What is our desired outcome?

Tactics broadly fall under three main types: media relations, events and sponsorship. When you have answered the questions above, you can start to decide which of the following to use.
Media relations

Figure 2.1.2 shows media relations tactics and outcomes.

Create a ‘hook’ to get a journalist to write about it (or feature on-air or in broadcast coverage). You can do this using:
- press launches
- desk visits
- competitions
- photocalls, perhaps with a celebrity
- stunts – the higher impact, the better
- news agenda to drive a story about your product or organisation
- story creation.

What you hope to achieve:
- customer awareness
- information
- third party endorsement (from journalist)
- empathy
- engagement.

Press launch

This is when you invite targeted media to a launch to introduce them to a product or service and give them information about it. They will generally receive a press release at the event, which is a document detailing the information about the organisation or product to take away with them, and often also a press gift, which may be a sample of the product, or just a fun item to make them remember the brand when they are writing articles. As journalists get invited to a lot of press launches, it is helpful to find an original venue that you know they would like to visit; make it easy for them to get there, and ensure the presentation is relevant and interesting. If you are organising a press launch for a pharmaceutical client, you need to be aware of the PAGB (Proprietary Association of Great Britain) and ABPI guidelines that regulate this, which are mentioned on page 12.

Desk visits

The PR professional makes an appointment to visit a journalist at their office to present one-on-one to them. This has the advantage of not taking up too much of the journalist’s time and they are able to ask direct questions tailor-made to their publication.

Competitions

A wide range of publications carry competitions and a well-executed one can be a good way to gain coverage for your product or service. Not only will you be guaranteed a brand mention in your chosen media, but a large number of people will interact with your brand in order to win the prize. This is especially true if you are running your competition on a social media or web platform where you can ask people to upload pictures or vote for something, and create ‘user generated content’. By doing this, the users are providing third party endorsement to your brand.

Photocall

For a photocall, a high-impact picture is staged and photographed so that the newspapers and online media sites can use the photographs in the next day’s editions. It is possible to use a specialist company to take and distribute the photographs for you; the most well known of these is the Press Association.
Unit 2: Understanding public relations

2.1: Understand the purpose of public relations

**Activity**
Visit [www.pressassociation.com/pr-services/pr-photography.html](http://www.pressassociation.com/pr-services/pr-photography.html) to look at some of the images on the Press Association website. Do you recall seeing any of these images in the media?

**Stunts**
A PR stunt is designed to attract the public’s and media’s attention to an organisation’s product or cause. A good stunt will offer photo and video opportunities and news value. Many good stunts will now go viral on Facebook, YouTube and other video sharing sites which further increases the organisation’s reach. For a stunt to be effective it must be meticulously planned and obvious why the organisation is involved. Some publicity stunts are so good they are repeated – the torch relay in the Olympic Games was originally created to draw attention to the games and the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York was started in 1924 as a way of drawing attention to the store.

**News agenda**
If you think back to the initial questions in this section, you will see that the news agenda is dependent on the target audience of the media. If you work in financial or medical PR, you may be able to use one of the organisation’s spokespeople to comment on the news agenda as an expert, since expert analysis and comment is often sought after in these industries. If your organisation has an expert who can speak for your organisation, it helps to build your corporate identity as a trusted source. However, if you are trying to obtain local coverage, you need to use the local news agenda for their interest – for example, a large charity bike ride in London will be of little interest to the Derby Evening Telegraph no matter how many celebrities attend; if, however, the charity bike ride is taking place in the Peak District, they may well cover the story, and the charity as a local news story. If your target media is a women’s glossy weekly, your news agenda may be fashion or beauty tips from current celebrities, or in a trade magazine it could be awards that your company has recently won. The key is to ensure that your press release, phone call or email does have a good fit with the news agenda of the publication you are targeting.

**Story creation/feature release**
This is when the PR professional creates a story for media outlets to run. This may be a human interest piece such as a case study; charities and OTC (over the counter) healthcare companies often use these. It may be a feature about an important business person to help raise the profile of their organisation. Stories can also often be created by the use of statistics taken from research, surveys and top ten lists. When creating stories for national magazines it is important to think ahead as stories relating to summer or Christmas specials are usually prepared well in advance.

**Key term**
**Viral** – circulated quickly to many people on the internet.

**Take it further**

**Links**
There is more about media relations in Unit 5: Understanding the media landscape and Unit 8: Pitching public relations stories to the media.
Activity

Look at a recent newspaper or national magazine and see if you can identify stories that may have been placed by PR firms (weekend newspapers often carry these stories). Why do you think the firms would have wanted the stories to appear in this publication?

Events

Figure 2.1.3 shows events tactics and outcomes.

These can be to generate good media relations or, more importantly, when used correctly they can give an organisation a chance to interact directly with its stakeholders:

- parties
- sampling activities
- exhibitions
- roadshows
- AGMs
- conferences.

What you hope to achieve:

- customer awareness
- information
- third party endorsement (word of mouth)
- empathy
- engagement.

As with many other aspects of PR there are crossovers – for example, you could argue that a press launch and PR stunt are both events. This is true, but in this section we will be exploring events as a means of communicating directly with your organisation’s public and stakeholders rather than the media.

Parties/staff events

In internal PR a staff party or event can be an important way of communicating with staff and creating staff engagement. At staff parties the chief executive of an organisation can easily speak to the whole company at one time. They can communicate what has happened to the organisation over the past year and where it is heading strategically, or publicly recognise employees for their hard work. As with all PR activity, you should plan clearly what you want to communicate and design the event around that.

Sampling activities

A key way to communicate directly with customers is to arrange for them to sample your product. This is especially true as consumers are now bombarded with images and adverts every day, so sampling creates a one-to-one personal interaction with your brand. Sampling has been viewed as purely a sales promotion tool, as one of its main outcomes is to drive an uplift in sales. However, by using PR to sample in a creative way, you are more likely to create ongoing brand recognition.

Hendrick’s Gin used their sampling activity as part of a larger integrated campaign to travel around the country with their ‘curiositorium’ part-sponsoring events such as the Brighton Fringe Festival and hosting their own ‘Library of Delightfully Peculiar Writings’ events. At these events the public was asked to write down
a curious event to receive a free sample of a Hendrick's Gin cocktail. By asking people to do something in a fun atmosphere to receive their sample, Hendrick's Gin created stronger customer engagement.

**Exhibitions/trade shows**

These are used to showcase your organisation to interested parties and usually include your organisation operating a stand. They can be used to give out literature and information about your organisation, or as a sampling opportunity (see above). There are many different types and sizes of exhibitions from business-to-business (B2B) exhibitions to large consumer exhibitions, or smaller regional ones. Once again strategic planning of your organisation’s communication will help you to identify which would be the correct one to use.

Exhibitions often come with their own built-in PR opportunities such as appearing in the registration newsletter or sponsoring drinks parties for delegates. Again, being clear about what you want to achieve will ensure you choose the right opportunities for your organisation. You may also use an exhibition to increase media interest, especially if the exhibition is a large one, as it will be covered by the relevant trade press. Some exhibitions, such as the large technology exhibitions, hold press preview events where the media are invited in advance of the opening day.

**Roadshows**

These are an excellent but often expensive way to communicate with an organisation’s stakeholders around the country. A roadshow is similar to a travelling press launch (although the target outcome may not necessarily be media relations) and is a good way to target regional stakeholders and press. Roadshows are used by lots of organisations from the UK Border Control Agency to the Soil Association as they are a good way to meet the public face to face and can generate a large amount of feedback for your organisation.

**AGMs**

The AGM (Annual General Meeting) is a legally required meeting for shareholders of a company, held after the financial year end. An AGM, if planned well, provides the opportunity to hold two-way positive communication with shareholders and make them aware of all major developments within the company. In the interests of plain English, business jargon should be avoided at an AGM.

**Conferences**

There are many different reasons to hold a conference, ranging from internal PR conferences used to brief staff about large-scale operational changes or to develop an organisation’s annual strategy, to taking part in business-to-business conferences where an organisation invites other related businesses to learn about its own services and expertise, to web conferencing where presentations can be streamed directly from the boardroom to an organisation’s customers or staff.

The key to an effective conference is to establish in advance a measurable objective for the people who are taking part.
**Sponsorship**

Sponsorship consists of paying for third party endorsement, as by sponsoring an event and/or person, you have paid to be aligned with them. Sponsorship is one of the tactics that has a large crossover with marketing. It becomes a more integrated campaign when the sponsorship is leveraged to exploit PR outcomes. Long-term sponsorship of an event builds long-lasting relationships with stakeholders. **Figure 2.1.4** shows sponsorship tactics and outcomes.

When you sponsor an event, you are attempting to broaden your appeal with your customers and stakeholders, as well as showing your employees that you like and care about the same things they do. There are two main paths to take when choosing an event to sponsor.

1. Look for an event that has a complementary market for their product, such as Adidas and their sponsorship of sports stars – for example, through the production of David Beckham’s line of football boots, they have associated their brand name with that of a world-famous sports star.

2. Align yourself with an event you think your customers will appreciate as you will be demonstrating similarity with their tastes and aspirations. A good example of this is the long-term sponsorship of the Frieze Contemporary Arts Fair in London by Deutsche Bank. On the face of it, banking and art are not complementary businesses, but by sponsoring an international arts fair Deutsche Bank is able to stand out from its competitors and use the brand image of the art fair to reflect well on itself. This is also the reason companies sponsor charity events; it helps to provide a ‘caring’ face of an organisation.

Many sponsorship opportunities also include hospitality packages. These give further leverage to the sponsorship activity as companies are then able to use these packages for client or media entertaining or staff reward programmes.

You should carefully plan your sponsorship opportunities and target those events and/or people who have a good fit with your organisation. It is also critical to consider how your brand will benefit from the alignment, and how many other brands will be competing with you. For example, the London 2012 Olympics had three tiers of sponsorship totalling 25 official ‘partners’.

Figure 2.1.4: Sponsorship tactics and outcomes

- **Sponsorship is fundamentally about securing third party endorsement** – you are aligning yourself with another brand:
  - party
  - charity/good cause
  - sporting event
  - cultural event
  - celebrity.

- **What you hope to achieve**:
  - customer awareness
  - information
  - third party endorsement (from the person/company you are sponsoring)
  - empathy
  - engagement.
Social media

Figure 2.1.5 shows social media tactics and outcomes.

Social media is constantly evolving and there are many different platforms on which to communicate with your various different stakeholders:
- Twitter
- Facebook/LinkedIn
- YouTube/Vimeo
- blog
- Flickr/Instagram/Pinterest
- buzz marketing
- viral campaigns.

What you hope to achieve:
- customer awareness
- information
- third party endorsement (viral or word of mouth)
- empathy
- engagement.

Social media is a rapidly growing part of PR tactics and PR professionals use social media every day to communicate with customers and media. Social media is now widely used across every platform from B2B communications to political figures building and guarding their reputations online. For example, Barack Obama has tweeted over 7,000 times and has over 20 million followers as of November 2012; he utilised the power of web 2.0 with strong use of blogging and social media to build his vote base and respond quickly to any issues that arose during his campaign.

It is important to remember that social media campaigns should be interactive and should establish a two-way communication between organisations and their public.

Advocacy marketing/viral marketing

This is also known as word-of-mouth marketing and is something that encourages users to pass it on and so generate more coverage naturally. A recent example of this was the T-Mobile royal wedding viral video, which was itself a copy of a real video that had gone viral. Apart from the viral buzz that was created, the posting also gained national news coverage. Viral marketing is an area that has very strong crossovers between advertising and PR, and the two disciplines have to work together very closely for full effectiveness.

Buzz marketing

This is when the users or customers of a product or service create a positive (or negative) ‘buzz’ about the product. The term ‘buzz marketing’ originally referred to word-of-mouth communication but is now used more often to describe the online buzz created around social media sites.

Buzz marketing works because individuals are easier to trust than organisations, which clearly have a vested interest in promoting their products and/or services.

Take it further

Search for and watch the T-Mobile royal wedding video on YouTube. You could also search for the original wedding dance video that inspired it.
Internal communications key tactics

**Figure 2.1.6** shows internal communications tactics and outcomes.

![Figure 2.1.6: Internal communications tactics and outcomes](image)

- Internal communicators need to use their skills and tactics to communicate company strategy:
  - internal publications
  - intranet
  - staff briefings
  - notice boards
  - videos and internet presentations.

What you hope to achieve:
- employee awareness
- information
- empathy
- engagement.

Although the scope of the internal communications role has changed and become more strategic with a closer remit to working at a director level, many tactics used to communicate these strategies to staff remain the same.

It is important to remember that if you have something important or something bad to communicate internally with your staff, they will prefer face-to-face communication. Newsletters, intranet messages or emails should be used to reinforce key messages, not to deliver them.

You should also remember that as with all PR activity, internal communication needs to be a two-way process. This is especially true if you are communicating a change in company strategy to employees who may be resistant to change.

Internal communicators also utilise web 2.0 tools; these can be internal twitter feeds or webchats with directors.

**Outcomes**

In Figures 2.1.2 to 2.1.6 the outcomes or goals have been similar. This is because PR is about communicating with a third party and building a relationship with that party; the communications strategy used will often be one of the defining characteristics of the organisation/brand in the public’s mind. Because of this, it is important to plan carefully what you are trying to achieve before you decide which tactics to use.

**Case study: Red Bull’s PR tactics**

Red Bull is a company that has successfully used sponsorship to increase its brand awareness. The company states that its target market cannot be defined by age or gender but by a ‘state of mind’. As such Red Bull targets their market with sponsorship of fast-paced and extreme sports and other lifestyle events. Red Bull differs in its approach from other companies in that it has sought out niche events – from BMX, to cliff diving, to aerial walking, to urban art projects, in which Red Bull has been able to dominate the sponsorship opportunity. Events are then placed on the company’s own YouTube channel, which has over 850,000 subscribers and over 460 million views, and posted on their Facebook page, which has over 33 million likes (as of November 2012).

*Continued on next page*
Case study: Red Bull’s PR tactics continued

The company now sponsors several companies/sports teams including two Formula 1 teams, three football teams, a NASCAR team and a hockey team (as of August 2012).

Red Bull also sponsors ‘opinion leaders’, again mainly in the extreme sports world, but also people in popular culture. Worldwide they are estimated to have 250 agreements in place with celebrities, but no written contracts. Additionally Red Bull hires brand ambassadors in universities across Europe and the USA.

Search YouTube for the Red Bull channel and look on Facebook for the Red Bull page.

Activity
1 Why do you think it is important that Red Bull ‘dominates’ the sponsorship activities it undertakes?
2 Why do you think it is important that Red Bull has generated content to play on YouTube and Facebook?
3 What does the addition of brand ambassadors offer to the campaign?
4 Using some of the tactics given under media relations, explain how you think Red Bull might drive its media relations strategy?
5 Looking in the ‘What you hope to achieve’ bubbles in Figures 2.1.2–2.1.6, do you think Red Bull met each of these outcomes with its integrated campaign?

Activity
1 Looking back at the Innocent case study on page 7, state what you think Frank PR’s key tactic was.
2 What other tactics do you think they would have used to get the press coverage in the national press?
3 Finally, how do you think the video ended up on YouTube and as a viral campaign? How do you think this added to the overall success of the campaign?
Unit 2: Understanding public relations

2.1: Understand the purpose of public relations

In order to complete the assessment for this unit, you will need to demonstrate that you understand the purpose of PR, the nature of the current industry and the importance of ethics in the industry. To prepare for the first part of the assessment, address the questions below.

1. Look at how different organisations define PR. How do their definitions differ? How are they similar?
2. Explain the links and differences between advertising, marketing and PR.
3. Explain how the work of PR professionals affects the success of a business.
4. Describe the range of different specialisms within PR.
5. Explain the impact of legal constraints on PR activities.
6. Identify the key tactics that are used in PR and assess how they are used in PR.

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