

## **Lesson 4- P.R. Principles:**

**1- Organizations exist only by public acceptance:** This is one of the oldest principles in the public relations profession. The word —acceptance‖ here means —agreement‖ or —permission.‖ But in what way does the public give its —acceptance‖ for an organization to exist? If the organization is a —for-profit‖ company, its existence rests upon whether the public buys its product or services. Without this consumer public, that organization would not exist.

If it's a —not-for-profit‖ organization, its existence is dependent upon people giving their time (volunteering) or money (donations). Without these things, this organization would not exist.

**2- Mutually beneficial relationships require two-way Communication:** What this simply means is that in addition to sending messages to their publics, organizations receive them as well. Today, organizations must listen to their stakeholders/publics — especially with in the social media age. There needs to be a dialogue, not a monologue. Additionally, organizations must demonstrate they have heard their publics by adjusting policies and products to their publics' needs and wants — as much as possible.

**3- It is not our job to put a clean shirt on a dirty body:**

Many people believe this is the fundamental job of public relations Practitioner — to make something appear better than it actually is. Using Hype, manipulation, distraction — and maybe outright lies — the practitioner uses —spin‖ to put a good face on someone or something that is essentially not good. If our job is to build and sustain relationships, spin destroys the most important part to a healthy relationship (trust). Once that trust is lost, it is very difficult to regain it. And, at that point, the relationship is in jeopardy. If your public has a

choice whether to be in relationship with you or not (e.g., there are comparable products or services on the market), it may decide to sever the relationship.

**4- Act, then communicate:** If your product is defective... fix it, If your Policy is damaging... revise it, and then talk about it.

**5- Clarity is more important than cleverness:** Clear communication is difficult. Don't lose your message by trying to be clever. If your goal is to build relationships, then clear communication is essential. There is a lot of focus today about the channels of communication – from the changing digital landscape (e.g., media convergence) to the ever expanding social media toolbox. Selecting the right channel to reach your audiences is critical. The wrong channel ensures that your message will be not been delivered. But using the right channel does not necessarily mean communication will take place; it only means the message was received. In order for a message to be acted upon, it needs to gain the attention of the audience, be understood, and clearly address the audience's needs and wants.

**6-Activity does not equal results :**There is a difference between production and outcome, between activities and results. Your clients or bosses will expect that your public relations strategies and tactics will —move the needle.‖ In other words, something has to happen as a result of your public relations efforts. The public relations situation needs to change.

More than ever before, organizations are seeking – even demanding – and tangible ROI (return on investment). They want to know if they spend money and resources on public relations that will yield a return in the form of better stakeholder relationships, less opposition, stronger

support, improved reputation, positive attitudes, greater cooperation, and more customers buying the product or using the service.

**7- Never refuse an opportunity to tell your side of the story:** When the news is bad, many organizations refuse to talk to the media. Instead, they say, —no comment. To the public, however, —no comment means —we’re guilty. It also means —we’re uncooperative. By telling your side of the story (especially in a bad situation), the public relations professional can help —frame the story in the best possible light – without, of course, making a bad situation look better than it is (i.e., spin). But, the fact is, there are usually multiple —frames that can be legitimately applied to the same situation. The media usually will pick the most dramatic frame because it makes for a better story. Your job as the P.R. professional is to make sure the frame is fair and accurate – and also to suggest another frame, if necessary, that more accurately reflects the reality of the situation.

**8 – Manage expectations:** The key to fostering healthy relationships with all stakeholders is managing expectations. For example, if a company exaggerates product claims, consumers will be disappointed when the product falls short. Likewise, when P.R. practitioners hype (exaggerate) an event, attendees will be upset when the reality doesn’t match the slogans. Same is true about pitching a story to the media. Journalists will stop using you as a news source if you consistently offer —fluff stories with little or exaggerated substance.

**9 – Practice public relations proactively, whenever possible:**

According to the freedictionary.com, —proactive means —controlling a situation by causing something to happen rather than waiting to respond to it after it happens. Public relations is more effective if it is planned, intentional, and controlled. Reactive public relations puts an

organization on the defensive and creates an environment for spin. Proactive public relations requires that organizations are continually monitoring various environments, assessing relationships, and identifying and tracking issues that may affect the organization. Research shows that most organizational crises could have been prevented through early intervention. The goals of —issues tracking‖ are to prevent problems and take advantage of opportunities.