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2

The History of Modern Public Relations

From Barnum to Lee, Bernays to Page, and Introducing Other Pioneers

Learning Objectives

- 2.1** Identify key developments in the modern history of PR
- 2.2** Explain the growth of the PR agency business model
- 2.3** Summarize the challenges PR will face in the years to come

Scenario

Belle Moskowitz: Pioneer and Innovator in Advocacy and Issues Management

Anyone who has ever visited New York City—or viewed its skyline—recognizes the Empire State Building in Midtown Manhattan.

The 102-story art-deco style building features the world-famous Observatory, which has been featured in movies (e.g., *Sleepless in Seattle*, *Annie Hall*, and *King Kong*) and on television since it opened April 11, 1931, 12 days ahead of schedule. In November 2019, the Observatory was reopened after a major renovation with great fanfare, including an on-location broadcast of the network program *CBS This Morning*.

Without question, it is an iconic building with a rich history and serves as a lasting symbol of one of the world's great cities.

However, few people know the story of the landmark building's construction during the Great Depression (1929–1939) or the many challenges that creating “the world's tallest building” posed for city leaders and the project's developers. During the construction phase, when several other tall buildings were also going up in New York, residents were reportedly concerned about construction accidents, worker safety, and the long-term impact on the city's quality of life.

Fewer still know the critical role played by Belle Moskowitz—an innovative public relations and advocacy professional—who advised the developer and helped to reassure the public. Her work helped pave the way for creation of an international landmark and popular tourist attraction that attracts 4 million visitors a year.

According to research by the Museum of Public Relations (2018), Moskowitz was a communications practitioner during the Progressive Era (1890–1920). She began her career in the early 20th century as a social worker, focusing her efforts on social and education reforms for young women.

Belle Moskowitz became the first woman to serve as a political consultant and the first woman to open a PR firm, Publicity Associates in 1928. Moskowitz was highly visible in New York, working as campaign manager for Al Smith, a successful gubernatorial candidate who served four terms beginning in 1918.

One of her first clients was the developer's company behind the Empire State Building. She helped manage communications during the planning and construction of the landmark up to and including the grand opening on May 1, 1931 (Perry, 2009).

Her challenge was to manage public perceptions during the Great Depression, which was a time of great stress and tension in the United States. Specifically, some citizens of New York saw the new building as a symbol of hope and evidence of America's construction and engineering prowess. Others were concerned about the risks to workers and citizens associated with the massive project.



Constructed during the Great Depression, the Empire State Building was the first client of PR pioneer Belle Moskowitz.

Science & Society Picture Library / Contributor / Getty Images

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Student Challenge

Put yourself in Belle Moskowitz's shoes. Think about what you would have recommended to offset public concern and simultaneously celebrate the hope this project embodied for New York and the United States at a critical time in our history.

Answer the following questions—and remember the time period of this Scenario is the early 20th century, so adjust your answers to the technology and media available at the time:

1. What tactics would you use to manage the issues and prevent a crisis?
2. How could the company be more open and responsive?
3. How would you minimize public concerns about safety and disruption?
4. How would this case be different today versus in the 1930s? ●

This chapter will take the reader through a brief history of the public relations (PR) industry—with an emphasis on the “modern era” since it is most relevant to the PR business today. In the pages that follow, you will learn about some well-known industry pioneers like Ivy Lee, Edward Bernays, and Arthur W. Page and some of the colorful figures in history—such as P. T. Barnum—who practiced early forms of PR and advertising to generate awareness for their businesses.

You will also read about some other industry pioneers—notably women and minorities—whose contributions are not as well-known, but no less significant. Their contributions to PR history have been largely overlooked, but they are essential to provide you with a complete picture of the development of the profession. They may also provide you, as a PR student, with role models you can relate to as you build your own career.

Later in the chapter, you will also learn about the PR agency business and how it has become a force in the industry and a rewarding career path for many practitioners. Many of the innovations and creative strategies commonly deployed by PR professionals (e.g., media tours, thought leadership, competitive intelligence) originated in agencies. Further, as we will outline later, the agency business is an excellent training ground for young professionals regardless of their ultimate career path in PR.

Finally, to help you prepare and respond, this chapter looks at some key trends—digital, global, and social responsibility (SR)—that will impact the future of the PR industry.

A History of Public Relations in the Modern Era

» LO 2.1 Identify key developments in the modern history of PR

The biggest challenge in writing a history of PR is this: Where do we start?

Do we begin with Plato and the ancient Greeks? Or examine the communication tactics used by the Catholic Church in the 1500s to spread Christianity? Or the efforts of leaders in the Middle Ages and Renaissance to expand their empires, build followers, and stabilize their leadership position using communications tactics?

After all, when viewed through the lens of influencing public opinion or driving change, we can see public relations elements at work in the Norman Conquest, the

Crusades, and both the French and American Revolutions (Bates, 2006). When America was a British colony in the late 1700s, PR tactics like the Boston Tea Party led by Sam Adams built support for the American Revolution by encouraging dissent and disagreement with British rules and regulations. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, an influential pamphlet on American independence, may have been the first political communications campaign and was an early example of PR designed to support activism. The *Federalist Papers*, authored by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, were written to support ratification of the U.S. Constitution, and are very similar to the opinion pieces (op-eds) written and published today to influence public opinion.

Public Relations and Press Agency: The Era of the 1800s

As America expanded in the 18th century, PR moved from building support for American independence to a more commercially focused enterprise. Driven by the dramatic expansion of newspapers and entrepreneurs launching new businesses and/or promoting authors and celebrities, PR moved into what is referred to as the “Golden Age of Press Agency.”

The period saw the rise of the press agent, whose job it was to “hype” companies, products, entertainment, and “celebrities”—by almost any means necessary. The tactics were often short on ethics and focused solely on achieving publicity. Exaggeration, lies, and outright fabrication became common practice among many of these “publicists,” along with free tickets, gifts, or other compensation to get reporters to write about their clients. Characters such as Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone, Annie Oakley, or Buffalo Bill were created, or their exploits exaggerated, to sell tickets, win votes, or get news coverage. Unfortunately, this approach to PR remains a common perception of the profession even today.

One of the best-known figures of these freewheeling times was P. T. Barnum—considered the Great American Showman—whose namesake circus and museum continued to operate long after his death. Many believe Barnum, who was reportedly the second millionaire in the United States, was the originator of the **publicity stunt**, which is a **press event** or activity created solely to get news coverage. Former Librarian of Congress Daniel Boorstin described these as “pseudo-events” (1992, p. 9) and suggested Barnum was the acknowledged master of his time at this tactic. “Whatever your occupation, whatever your purpose, if you need the support of the public then take the steps necessary to let them know about it,” P. T. Barnum said (Quoteswise, n.d.).

Examples of Barnum's creativity and style include Joyce Heth, whom he promoted as the 161-year-old former nursemaid to George Washington, and the Feejee Mermaid, a stuffed half-monkey/half-fish creature. Both of these were exhibited at his American Museum in New York and drew big crowds. Barnum knew that both controversy and curiosity sell, and he used that knowledge to draw people in to see if the hype was accurate. Once they paid for admission and were in the door, other exhibits and shows were there to entertain and educate.



P. T. Barnum is credited by some as the originator of the “press event” or “publicity stunt.”
Hulton Archive / Stringer / Getty Images

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND BARNUM

Kathleen Maher, curator of the Barnum Museum in Bridgeport, Connecticut (Barnum's adopted hometown where he served as mayor in 1875), has studied his legacy and suggests that Barnum's contributions go beyond eccentric exhibits and bombast. His worldwide tours for General Tom Thumb, a midget who could sing, dance, and act, and his promotion of Jenny Lind, the "Swedish Nightingale," may be considered precursors to today's reality television and musical contest shows. As well, Barnum would often donate a portion of the proceeds of his shows to local charities to generate positive publicity—an early example of SR, also called strategic philanthropy. Maher writes,

Whether fact or fiction, the conclusion was less relevant than the experience or opportunity. Barnum was ingenious in presenting speculation within a world of curiosity. He offered a chance to explore the irrational, examine imaginative possibilities, and derive new opinions and truths. His pioneering spirit of promotion and his acumen for business transformed popular conceptions of the era, in turn defining many ideals of today. (K. Maher, personal communication, 2017)

A colorful character to be sure, Barnum deserves further study—and perhaps some reevaluation—for his contributions to the growth and development of promotional PR and strategic philanthropy.

Railroads Drive Public Relations' Development

We know from U.S. history that the railroad industry was a major factor in the growth and development in the country. In the latter stages of the 19th century, the railroad industry initiated and used many PR tactics now seen as commonplace. These include distribution of pamphlets and materials promoting migration to the western United States; creating publicity and information offices in new market areas; and staging promotional "road shows" that traveled the country on railroad cars (naturally) and featured murals, artwork, and artifacts promoting the quality of life in the western United States.

By all accounts, these tactics worked, and westward migration swelled—with 5 million people resettling in the Midwest and more than 2 million farms being established. Commenting on this achievement, Andy Piasecki (2000), a lecturer at Queen Margaret College in Edinburgh, Scotland, and a PR historian, suggests that "none of this could have been achieved without complex communications strategies closely linked to business objectives." Clearly, as the 1800s wound down, PR had begun yet another transformation, moving away from publicity for its own sake to communications strategies designed to achieve specific business objectives.

Building on the work of late 19th century anti-segregation activists like Ida Wells and John Muir, PR professionals began to take on more substantive social issues as the 20th century approached. These two activists, and others like them, made significant contributions that paved the way for the *modern era of PR*.

Ida Wells was born a slave and rose to adulthood to fight discrimination as a speaker, editor, and founder of an antisegregation newspaper in Memphis. She was also a cofounder and early leader of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Lesser known is that in 1884, at the age of 22, Wells refused to move to the "colored section" when ordered to do so by a railroad conductor, many years before Rosa Parks became famous for a similar act on a bus in Alabama in 1955 (Hannah-Jones, 2017).



The movement of public relations into social issues in the 20th century built upon the work of 19th-century activists like Ida B. Wells (left) and John Muir (right).

Chicago History Museum / Contributor / Getty Images; Bettmann / Contributor / Getty Images

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ADVOCACY

Like Wells, John Muir was also an activist, although his focus was on preserving and protecting nature. John Muir was most active in the 1860s. He wrote books and magazine articles, gave speeches to engage U.S. citizens on conservation efforts, and led the creation of national parks across the country (National Park Service, n.d.). Muir founded the Sierra Club, and his environmental activism helped preserve the Yosemite Valley, Sequoia National Park, and other wilderness areas for future generations. He was an early proponent of sustainability, and because of his efforts, the government and the business community came to exercise restraint in dealing with America's natural resources.

Pioneers of Modern Public Relations

Most scholars agree that the pioneers of the modern style of PR were Ivy Lee, regarded as the originator of the *public relations counsel* concept; Edward Bernays, often referred to as the *father of modern public relations*; and Arthur Page, revered for his groundbreaking work as the *first corporate PR officer* at AT&T. These leaders took PR into the corporate boardroom, politics, and government. Through the work of these and other trailblazers, PR professionals began to take on major social issues and critical business challenges, moving beyond the bombast of P. T. Barnum and the late 19th-century publicists.

Ivy Lee

With the opening of one of the first firms in 1904 in New York, Ivy Lee and his partner George Parker raised the bar for the PR industry, declaring themselves as “public relations counselors.” The firm was called Parker & Lee, and its major clients



Ivy Lee, alongside his partner George Parker, opened one of the first PR firms in New York in 1904. His successful campaign in support of a rate hike for the Pennsylvania Railroad is considered a landmark in the history of PR.

ullstein bild Dtl. / Contributor / Getty Images

were the Pennsylvania Railroad, the Rockefeller family, and the American Tobacco Company, as well as some Hollywood studios and the New York subway system.

One of the firm's first clients, the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, hired them to build support for a 5% rate hike. Ivy Lee developed a comprehensive PR campaign, reaching out to the company's key stakeholders—the media, railroad employees, passengers, customers, and state and federal elected officials—as well as to college presidents, religious leaders, and other opinion leaders to help make the company's case and convince the government regulators to approve the increase (St. John, 2006). These efforts paid off. Public opposition declined, multiple outside groups supported the rate hike, and the federal government ultimately approved the 5% rate hike. This campaign is heralded as “a landmark in the history of advocacy public relations” (St. John, 2006, p. 225).

However, Ivy Lee was not without his detractors. While he is generally lauded for his pioneering role as a PR counsel, he was also accused of not being transparent regarding some controversial clients. He was criticized for working for the American Russian Chamber of Commerce during the Stalin era and for promoting the German Dye Organization, later discovered to be an organization owned by the Nazi party. Notwithstanding these issues, Ivy Lee made major contributions to the practice of modern PR. Commenting on Lee's contributions, Fraser P. Seitel (2013) concluded that Lee, more than any other, brought the practice of PR into the 21st century.

Edward L. Bernays

Following in the tradition of Lee, Edward L. Bernays was another pivotal figure in the development of modern PR. He believed PR was most effective when social science and behavioral psychology were leveraged in PR campaigns to change behavior or shape public opinion (Bernays, 2015). Reflecting his family heritage as the nephew of Sigmund Freud, his PR model was based on using scientific persuasion techniques to advocate for a position or product. He was one of the first to emphasize identifying your target audience, conducting research to understand their views, and tailoring your message accordingly.

He detailed this view in his seminal book *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (2015), first published in 1923 and still read today by students and scholars of the discipline. Later in his career, Bernays was invited to join the faculty of New York University (NYU) and teach one of the first courses on PR in the United States. He wrote,

The public relations counsel is the pleader to the public of a point of view. He acts in this capacity as a consultant both in interpreting the public to his client and in helping to interpret his client to the public. He helps to mold the action of his client as well as to mold public opinion. (Bernays, 2015, p. 57)

As his many innovative campaigns demonstrate, Bernays was an innovator and a creative genius. Whether it was his work for the Ivory soap brand, when he created a children's soap carving contest that sold millions of bars of soap; the famous “Torches of Freedom” campaign for American Tobacco in 1929, in which he hired

fashion models to smoke in public (then considered taboo for women) during New York’s Easter parade; or his campaign for a “Hearty American Breakfast,” which included eggs and bacon (Hormel was his client), he was all about the “big idea” (The Museum of Public Relations, n.d.).

According to Larry Tye (2002), the author of *Father of Spin: Edward L. Bernays and the Birth of Public Relations*, Bernays was “the first to demonstrate for future generations of PR people how powerful their profession could be in shaping America’s economic, political and cultural life.”

Lesser known, but well appreciated within the PR industry, was the role Bernays’s wife—Doris E. Fleischman, a writer, feminist, and former editor of the *New York Tribune*—played in his work. She was his partner in life and in business and took on many of the responsibilities behind the scenes for their clients, as well as writing and editing books and articles on her own (Tye, 2002).

Among her other duties, Fleischman wrote the firm’s newsletter for clients called *Contact*. This publication explained the value of public relations and was vital to the firm’s growth and success. Bernays described his wife as his most valuable asset and their relationship as a “twenty-four-hour-a-day-partnership” (Schroeder, 2015).

Bernays and Fleischman were also active in promoting causes and charities, pioneering the concept of *pro bono work* in PR, a still common form of social responsibility (SR).

Arthur W. Page

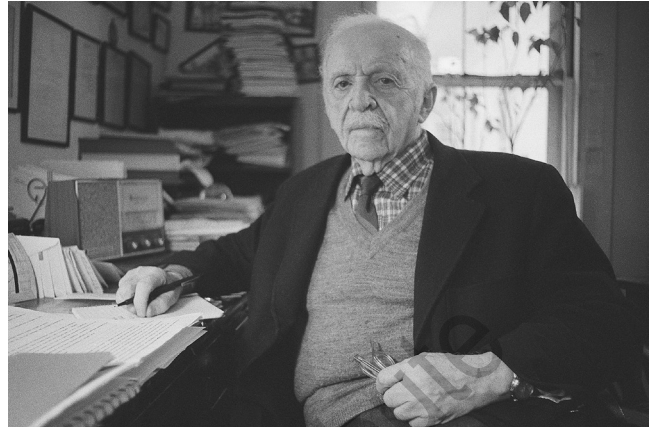
The philosophy and approach of Arthur W. Page, a pioneer in the world of corporate PR and career executive at AT&T, is summed up in this statement:

All business in a democratic country begins with public permission and exists by public approval. If that is true, it follows that business should be cheerfully willing to tell the public what its policies are, what it is doing, and what it hopes to do. This seems practically a duty. (Arthur W. Page Center, 1932)

AT&T had a long history of pioneering the use of publicity to build its business, and Page was a pivotal figure in that effort (Block, n.d.).

As far back as the early 1900s, AT&T hired the Publicity Bureau of Boston, one of the first PR agencies in the United States, to promote its products and services. One of the staff members on their account was James Ellsworth, whom the company later enticed to join them and create their first PR department at AT&T.

One day early in his career at the publishing company owned by his family, Page received a telephone call from Walter Gifford, the chief executive of AT&T. When the two met a few days later, Gifford asked Page if he would write a book about AT&T. Page declined, explaining that while it might be a nice ego boost for management, it wouldn’t do the company any good. This advice reflected Page’s belief that reputation was earned by actions, not just through publicity. As their conversation drew to a close, Gifford asked Page if he would like to put his ideas



Edward Bernays was one of the first PR professionals to use social science and behavioral psychology in developing his techniques. Bettmann / Contributor / Getty Images

about communication and reputation into practice at AT&T. Page agreed, but only if it would be in a policy-making position (Block, n.d.).

Arthur Page was hired in 1927 and served as the company's first vice president of PR and was appointed as a corporate officer. He remained with the company until his retirement in 1948. During his career, he was elected to the AT&T Board of Directors and later served on other corporate boards and was an advisor to several presidents of the United States. Years later, communications leaders from major companies and top PR firms would form the Arthur W. Page Society (now called simply "Page") to further the study and practice of public relations as a management function.

PR PROFILE

Ofield Dukes



The Washington Post / Contributor / Getty Images

There were many firsts in the life of Ofield Dukes.

Dukes was described by Robert Johnson, founder of Black Entertainment Television (BET) and publisher of

Ebony and *Jet* magazines, as a "brilliant PR strategist." A former journalist, his milestone accomplishments include the following:

- His first job in Washington, DC, was at the U.S. Department of Labor, serving as the Deputy Director of Public Affairs of the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity (appointed by President Kennedy in 1961).
- He was the first African American PR professional to open an office at the National Press Building, two blocks from the White House in April of 1969. His early clients included Motown Records, Lever Brothers (now Unilever), and Anheuser-Busch.
- In 1971, he helped establish the first Congressional Black Caucus, which is a leading voice on Capitol Hill for civil rights and equality.
- He was one of the first PR professionals to teach a course at Howard University's

School of Communications on Public Relations (1971).

- In July of 2001, he was the first person of color to win the coveted Gold Anvil Award from the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) for his lifetime of achievement.

Yet for someone who advised presidents that included both Lyndon Johnson and Bill Clinton and civil rights leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, John Lewis, and A. Phillip Randolph, Dukes was by all accounts a modest and sincere practitioner for whom "public relations was his passion and truth his guiding force," suggests his daughter, Roxi Trapp-Dukes Victorian in his autobiography (Smith & Anderson, 2018).

Born in August 1932 in Rutledge, Alabama, a small community between Mobile and Montgomery, Dukes's parents were sharecroppers, picking cotton on land owned by whites. In 1940 when he was 6, his family joined the migration of southern Blacks to the big cities of the North. His father had found work at a Ford Motor Company factory, and he and his mother and sisters moved to Detroit to be with him soon after.

After serving in the Army in Korea, he returned home to Michigan and entered Wayne State University to study journalism, graduating in 1958. As a freelance journalist and later editor at the *Michigan Chronicle*, a Black weekly newspaper, and in between as news director at WCHB, a Black-owned radio station, Dukes

had a front-row seat for many of the major news stories of the day.

During his time as a reporter, he won several awards from the National Newspapers Publishers Association for his writing and caught the eye of senior advisors to President Lyndon B. Johnson. Soon after, he was invited to come to Washington to work in the Johnson–Humphrey administration. Dukes describes this experience in his autobiography, *Ofield: The Autobiography of Public Relations Man Ofield Dukes*, as a “significant change in my life and my professional identity” (Smith & Anderson, 2018). “Washington, DC, is the public relations capital of the world. Nothing happens in the city without a mixture of public relations and politics,” he wrote.

Summing up his remarkable career, Ofield Dukes wrote this in the opening chapter of his autobiography:

During my 32 years in public relations, I had struggled, worked extra hard, with a passion to be excellent and the best I could be. I wanted to prove that a Colored man, a Negro, a Black, an African-American professional could successfully operate in the mainstream of the public relations industry. (2018)

By all accounts, Dukes proved he could “operate” with the best of them in Washington, DC, and nationally. He was a pioneer among 20th-century PR practitioners and a mentor and role model to countless young African American scholars and PR professionals. ●

Source: Adapted from *Ofield: The Autobiography of Public Relations Man Ofield Dukes*, Rochelle L. Ford, PhD, and Rev. Unnia L. Pettus, PhD, PRMuseum Press, 2017.

Other Innovators of Modern Public Relations

While Ivy Lee, Edward Bernays, and Arthur Page were towering figures in the development of modern PR practice, others made significant contributions to the profession but are not as widely known or celebrated. For example, innovators in the political and governmental communications arena include George Creel, Amos Kendall, Leonne Baxter, and Elmer Davis (see Table 2.1).

George Creel’s work on behalf of the war effort (World War I) under President Woodrow Wilson was groundbreaking for several reasons. Among Creel’s many accomplishments was the creation of the “Four Minute Men” group, who traveled the country speaking to the public about World War I and supporting the president’s positions and views (Creel, 1920). They worked under the supervision of the U.S. Committee on Public Information, which Creel led.

In those early days, the local movie theater was a primary gathering spot for communities across the country—especially on the weekends. However, the projectors in these older theaters were manually operated, and the film canisters usually had to be changed midmovie. During this downtime—usually about 4 minutes—speakers from the Committee would update moviegoers on current events and the progress of the war, thus the name “Four Minute Men.” This effort is regarded as one of the first instances of a *speaking tour* to support a communications objective (Creel, 1920).

Other notable PR pioneers in other sectors of the industry include Warren Cowan, whose firm Rogers and Cowan remains one of the leaders in *entertainment PR* today with a stable of global celebrities as clients, and Eleanor Lambert, a major figure in *fashion PR* who first introduced designers like Bill Blass and Calvin Klein and created the “Best Dressed List.”

TABLE 2.1

Notable Early Political Communicators

NAME	PROFESSION	CONTRIBUTION
George Creel	Headed U.S. Committee on Public Information during WWI	Use PR to sell liberty bonds and build the Red Cross
Amos Kendall	First White House press secretary	Worked for President Andrew Jackson in the 1830s
Leone Baxter	Founded the first political consulting firm in the United States	Founded his firm in 1933 with partner Clem Whitaker and developed strategies still used today
Elmer Davis	Conceived and promoted WWII victory gardens	Worked for President Franklin D. Roosevelt to encourage citizens to grow their own vegetables to help the war effort

Other pioneers, like Chester Burger, made major contributions in the planning and implementation of *corporate PR*. Burger pioneered the use of television news by PR professionals and advised major companies (e.g., AT&T) on how to package news stories for the new medium when it debuted in the 1950s (Gregory & Kirschenbaum, 2012).

Growth of the Public Relations Agency Sector

» LO 2.2 Explain the growth of the PR agency business model

No review of the evolution of modern PR would be complete without a discussion on the PR agency business and the contributions of its early pioneers, including Harold Burson, Daniel J. Edelman, and John W. Hill. While there are many outstanding businesspeople who founded, or now head up, small and large PR firms or agencies, there is almost universal agreement that Burson, Edelman, and Hill are three of the pioneers and builders of the PR agency business.

Harold Burson

Regarded by his peers, clients, and current and former employees as a legend in the agency business, Harold Burson began his career in the 1940s as a journalist working for the Armed Forces Radio Network. In this capacity, he was assigned to cover the post-World War II International War Crimes Trial in Nuremberg, Germany, of Nazi officers and sympathizers.

He founded his firm in 1953 with Bill Marsteller when they began working on the Rockwell Manufacturing account. In the early 1960s, the partners saw the potential of PR as a worldwide business and opened Burson-Marsteller's (B-M) first overseas office in Geneva, Switzerland.

PRWeek, citing a recent survey of industry leaders, described Harold Burson as one of "the 21st century's most influential PR figures" (*PRWeek*, 2016). Throughout its history, B-M has been viewed as a great place to work and as a leader in crisis communications and reputation management. Most famous among its work in this

arena was the Johnson & Johnson Tylenol poisoning case in 1982 (see the Case Study at the end of this chapter).

As with many major figures in the industry, B-M and Harold Burson are not without their critics. In the case of B-M, this was due to some controversial clients and assignments over the years. These include controversial government leaders in Nigeria, Argentina, and Indonesia; corporate clients facing crises like the Three Mile Island nuclear plant, Union Carbide, and the big tobacco companies; and certain companies seeking to discredit a competitor through negative media coverage, such as B-M client Facebook allegedly did with Google in 2011 (Benady, 2014).

Burson's thoughts on professional ethics and the firm's work for controversial clients were noted in a story about his death in *The Washington Post*:

We are in the business of changing and molding attitudes, and we aren't successful unless we move the needle, get people to do something. But we are also a client's conscience, and we have to do what is in the public interest. (Smith, 2020, para. 3)

His easygoing manner, years of experience, and extensive global contacts made Burson a beloved figure in the industry, and as such, his views on client service, staffing, and agency management were closely followed. Burson passed away in early 2020 at the age of 98. He was still going in to work a few days a week right up until the end of his life. Befitting his status and universal respect, his memorial service in New York drew a veritable who's who of the global PR industry.

Daniel J. Edelman

Dan Edelman founded his PR firm, Daniel J. Edelman, Inc., in 1952 and led its growth to become the world's largest independent PR firm as ranked by fee income (*PRWeek*, 2018). He began his career as a sports reporter in Poughkeepsie, New York, after World War II and became a news writer for CBS. Later, he served as PR director for the Toni Company (hair and beauty products) before founding his own firm in Chicago.

His initial focus was on marketing communications or PR to support sales and new production introductions. "He is credited by many as the father of marketing PR; he understood the potential of earned media to enhance the marketing message," his son, Richard Edelman, noted in a memorial speech to the Arthur Page Society in 2014.

Dan Edelman is credited with creating the idea of a *media tour*, during which company spokespeople travel to meet with local media and promote a product or service through events, interviews, and public appearances. One of the earliest versions of this tactic was for his client Toni, where Edelman had worked before starting the firm. The veteran publicist sent six pairs of identical twins—one with a Toni home permanent and one with a salon permanent—on a tour of 72 cities to publicize the "Which Twin Has the Toni?" ad campaign (Wisner, 2012). The concept was very successful, earning extensive media coverage for the client, and media tours soon became commonplace across the PR industry. It is now a staple tactic used by PR pros to promote products and services as well as companies and issues.

As the firm grew, Edelman expanded into all forms and disciplines of PR—corporate, public affairs, sustainability, employee communications, financial communications, social media, and, of course, marketing communications. As have the other global firms, Edelman has encountered criticism for some of its client work as it has grown. For example, in 2015 the firm faced controversy over advocating for climate change at the same time it represented several so-called "climate change deniers," such as the American Petroleum Institute (API). Soon after, the

firm resigned from its work for the API, which was a multimillion-dollar account (Edelman, 2015; Goldenberg, 2015).

Although Dan Edelman is gone now, his son Richard, who is CEO of the firm, and staffers worldwide believe that the spirit and philosophy of their founder is evident in their work with clients every day.

John W. Hill

John Hill, who established Hill & Knowlton (H&K) in 1933, began his career as a newspaper reporter, editor, and financial columnist. He established his first firm in 1927 in Cleveland, Ohio, and developed a clientele of banks, steel companies, and industrial companies operating in the midwestern United States. The firm became known as Hill & Knowlton in 1933, when Donald Knowlton, a former client, joined the firm as a partner. One year later, the partnership moved to New York to serve a major new client (the American Iron and Steel Institute [AISI]), and the beginnings of a major global firm were in place.

H&K was the first American PR firm to establish an office in Europe and, at its high point, was said to have “hung out its shingle” in hundreds of countries around the world. In building his firm with Knowlton, Hill was known for a simple business philosophy guided by “the essential requirements for PR: integrity and truth; soundness of policies, decisions and acts, viewed in the light of the public interest and use of facts that are understandable, believable and presented to the public with imagination” (PRSA New York, 2016). As with other major firms, there have been controversial clients (e.g., Church of Scientology, the government of Kuwait, the tobacco industry). However, the firm has also been recognized for its outstanding work for clients, promoting diversity, and being a good place to work by leading industry publications such as *PRWeek*.

INSIGHTS

African American and Women Pioneers in the Agency Field



MOSS HYLES KENDRIX
Educational Supervisor, N. Y. A.

Moss Kendrix

Moss H. Kendrix, November 1940 via Wikimedia Commons

Although not as widely known as Burson, Edelman, or Hill, other key figures in the PR agency field are also recognized as pioneers. These include Joseph V. Baker, Moss Kendrix, Barbara Hunter, Muriel Fox, Inez Kaiser, and Donald Padilla.

Joseph V. Baker

After working for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* as the first African American journalist (and also its city editor), in 1934 Baker opened the first Black-owned PR firm in the United States. He went on to acquire significant accounts from large corporations and became the first Black president of the Philadelphia PRSA chapter.

Moss Kendrix

An African American, Kendrix founded his own PR firm in Washington, DC, in 1944 to advise Coca-Cola and other major brands. He was instrumental in advising several large consumer product companies to stop using stereotypical images like Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben in their advertising and promotions.

Barbara Hunter

Hunter purchased the PR firm Dudley-Anderson-Yutzy (known as DAY) in the early 1960s along with her sister Jeanne Schoonover, becoming the first female owners/proprietors of a major PR firm. Over the years, the sisters made DAY into a force in consumer PR and marketing communications. Hunter founded a new firm, Hunter PR, when she was 65 years old. It's still in operation today.

Muriel Fox

Fox was the first female PR executive at Carl Byoir & Associates. In 1966, she cofounded with Betty Friedan the National Organization for Women (NOW). Fox also served for many years as NOW's communications director, responsible for both media and government relations. In 1974, she founded NOW's Legal Defense and Education Fund.

Inez Kaiser

In 1957, Kaiser opened a public relations firm in Kansas City, the first African American woman in the United States to do so. Her firm, whose clients included 7 Up, Lever Brothers, and Sears Roebuck, was also the first African American-owned business in Kansas City, Missouri. In the 1970s, Kaiser counseled the Nixon and Ford administrations on issues related to minority-owned businesses.

Don Padilla

Don Padilla was a journalist prior to creating his own PR firm in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In 1961, he joined forces with David Speer to form what was to become one of the largest PR firms in the Midwest, Padilla and Speer (today known as Padilla). As a leader in the Latino community, Padilla was active throughout his life in supporting civic, education, and arts organizations in his Minneapolis hometown. In 1996 following his death, the PRSA Minneapolis chapter created the Padilla Community Excellence Award in his honor. ●

Source: Compiled with the assistance of Museum of PR, personal communications, 2019.

Public Relations Comes of Age

Following the path set by these and other leaders, PR came of age in the 1960s and moved into an era of growth—both in the United States and around the world. Many experts attribute this to the booming economy in the post-World War II era, rapid advances in technology, and growth of the media—particularly television—as well as more active and more politically aware citizens.

Another key factor was the recognition by leaders in business, government, and nonprofit communities of the potential that PR offered to help their businesses or organizations prosper. They had witnessed firsthand the positive impact PR had in building support for the war effort and how Bernays, Lee, Page, and other leaders had helped businesses build awareness and market share.

The 1960s was also a period of social unrest and change, including the civil rights, anti-Vietnam War, and women's liberation movements—all of which featured high-profile activists, adept in working with the media and shaping public opinion.

PR News Award for Best Corporate Social Responsibility Annual Report—Viacom

Each year, *PR News*, one of the leading publications covering the PR industry and the sponsor of numerous workshops and recognition events, sponsors the CSR Awards competition. The awards, which culminate in a major event at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, have more than 20 categories into which companies and agencies submit their CSR work for review by a panel of distinguished judges.

Best Annual Report on CSR Activity

One of the key categories, and an area where PR professionals are often called in to assist, is the annual corporate report on sustainability, or CSR. In some cases, this can be part of the corporate annual report (a yearly document required of publicly traded companies), or it can be a separate document. In any case, it is a key document in which organizations and companies report on their CSR activities to the community and employees.

Raising Voices: Viacom Wins Award

At the 2016 awards ceremony, the winner in this category was Viacom. A major global entertainment company, Viacom's media networks include Nickelodeon, Comedy Central, MTV, VH1, Spike, BET, CMT, TV Land, Nick at Nite, Nick Jr., Channel 5 (UK), Logo, Nicktoons, TeenNick, and Paramount Channel, and together they reach a cumulative 3.4 billion television subscribers worldwide.

Viewers, Employees, and Management Involved

In selecting it as the winner, the judges noted Viacom's "deep commitment to telling viewers' stories, amplifying their voices to educate and empower people to make a difference."

"Viacommunity" Celebrated

Viacom's CSR efforts are detailed in a 100-page report that covers its "Viacommunity" initiatives and achievements for the year ending December 31, 2014. President and CEO Philippe Dauman explained that similar to its global business, Viacom's social initiatives are constantly accelerating. "To ensure our efforts are at their strongest and push further forward, we have laid out a series of social responsibility goals for the company," he said.

Opportunities for Women, Young People, and Minorities

A few of the company's noteworthy results include partnering with community organizations to increase opportunities for women, young people, and underrepresented minorities in tech; expanding employee volunteerism and supporting social change in underserved communities across Viacom's business network ●

Source: Seymour, 2016.

Public Relations' Focus Differs by Organization

For the business community, media relations research, planning, and implementation are crucial in understanding public opinion and identifying market opportunities. As the media has grown and shifted, the need for media relations specialists to accomplish corporate goals has also grown. Whether it is the mainstream business media (e.g., *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, or *Fortune* magazine), the television networks that grew to include cable news (e.g., CNN, MSNBC, etc.), or the many publications covering every major trade from accounting to zoology, getting a firm's story told and defending its reputation are paramount.

For government agencies and elected officials, PR strategies and tactics are now critical tools in delivering information and government services to people more effectively. For elected officials, mounting election or reelection campaigns requires effective media and community outreach, deep research to understand public opinion, and efficient message delivery to reach voters.

Nonprofit organizations have benefited as well from strategic PR. Fundraising is more successful, and campaigns have more impact. Working with the public and generating awareness via media coverage have become fundamental to a positive outcome. Digital media and social media have “democratized” the process of reaching the public, reduced costs, and increased efficiency. As a result, most nonprofit organizations have an active social media presence and understand it must be constantly updated.

Issue-based activist organizations like Greenpeace or Occupy Wall Street and political causes like Rock the Vote or the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) also have made effective use of PR strategies to advance their agendas. These groups have leveraged social media to develop coalitions, attract donations, and put pressure on government leaders.

Social media drove the Women’s March on Washington, DC, first held on January 21, 2017, the day after President Trump’s inauguration. The event drew close to a million protesters to the nation’s capital and to cities and towns on all seven continents. The protest movement began with a Facebook post by a concerned woman in Hawaii and grew through “shares” and “likes” by others who felt similarly about the results of the 2016 election. After the event, all four of the women who led the effort were selected by *Time* magazine as among the 100 most influential people of 2016.

In addition to social media, activist groups have made effective use of traditional PR tactics that include media relations, thought leadership, staged events, and original research to promote their causes and create awareness and conversation. These will be explored in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

The Future of Public Relations

>> LO 2.3 Summarize the challenges PR will face in the years to come

Looking ahead, what are the key trends to watch and understand to become valued as a strategic advisor to your clients, companies, and candidates? For the PR industry specifically, there are a few key issues worth examining: the growth of digital media, an increased emphasis on measurement and return on investment (ROI), integration of PR and marketing, the integration of PR and CSR and the need to improve diversity and inclusion, and to embrace globalization.



A native of Colombia, Maria Cardona leads the multicultural and public affairs practices for the Dewey Square Group based in Washington, DC.

Alexander Tamargo / Contributor / Getty Images

Growth and Impact of Digital Media

Without question, digital media is changing the way traditional PR is performed and, in the process, raising the expectations of management and clients for results. Recent research indicates that this is not an easy challenge. More people are online more often and consuming news and information, and fewer are getting their news from the traditional newspapers and cable and broadcast news stations. This will require a whole new set of skills for tomorrow's PR professionals.

According to the Pew Research Center Social Media Usage 2018 study (Smith & Anderson, 2018), nearly three quarters of American adults (73%) use social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn), up from 7% when it began systematically tracking social media in 2005. This is more than a tenfold increase in usage in the past 10 years (Perrin, 2015). Key statistics from Pew's research on media and news consumption show the following: A majority of U.S. adults (62%) get their news on social media, and 43% do so often (Smith & Anderson, 2018), compared to 49% of U.S. adults in 2012 who reported seeing news on social media (Gottfried & Shearer, 2016).

Increased Emphasis on Measurement and Return on Investment (ROI)

With the advent of social media and more sophisticated measurement techniques now available, detailed measurement of PR campaigns has become more commonplace. For years, the PR industry relied on unscientific and barely defensible measurement tools such as advertising value equivalency (AVE; e.g., what purchasing the airtime or ad space in the publication would cost) and/or tracking media impressions (calculations based on the circulation or viewership ratings of a media outlet). Management and clients have become sophisticated and are demanding measurement of specific outcomes (vs. outputs) and evidence of ROI for company resources allocated to PR activity.

Forrest Anderson, a leading PR research expert and founding member of the Institute for PR's Measurement Commission, explained, "The single most important thing people need to remember when measuring the impact of a communications program is their definition of impact, which should come from the initial, measurable objectives of the program" (2014, para. 1).

However, as Jo Ann Sweeney noted, "Often, clients want to dive in and measure before we are all clear what we are measuring and why" (Anderson, 2014, para. 2). Anderson agreed, saying, "I believe this is why many PR efforts fail—they don't have objectives to guide the strategies and tactics" (2014, para. 3).

In Chapter 4, this topic will be reviewed and discussed in greater detail.

Integration of Public Relations and Marketing

One of the more significant trends in recent years is the integration of marketing and product-related publicity into a field called integrated marketing communications (IMC). In this concept, PR, advertising, product development, and research professionals all work together to identify a need for a product, assess competitive activity or presence, identify and understand the target audience, and reach out to them via traditional and social media platforms.

The concept of integrated marketing communications, as described by Phillip Kotler, a noted professor and author of several foundational books on marketing,

involves coordinating the promotional elements to deliver a “clear, consistent, and compelling message about the organization and its products” (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). It calls for more than just developing a product, pricing it, and making it available to customers, he notes, “Companies must also communicate with current and prospective customers, and what they communicate should not be left to chance. All their communications efforts must be blended into a consistent and coordinated communications program” (Kotler & Gertner, 2002).

Intersection of Public Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility

While the practice of CSR has come a long way since its inception in the 1970s, some companies are just now beginning to capitalize on the bottom-line benefits and reputation enhancement potential that strategic CSR can produce. John Browne (former CEO of BP) and Robin Nuttall (Partner, McKinsey) suggest that companies may be failing to deliver on their CSR efforts due to poorly “integrated external engagement” (Browne & Nuttall, 2013).

“In practice, most companies have relied on three tools for external engagement: a full-time CSR team in the head office, some high-profile (but relatively cheap) initiatives, and a glossy annual review of progress,” write Browne and Nuttall (2013). In their view, more effort and resources are merited, given the positive returns of strategic CSR.

This is an area for focus and emphasis in the coming years. Many (if not all) company or client stakeholders are expecting leadership in CSR activities and initiatives as they seek to identify the winners and losers in this critical corporate activity. The expectations have grown along with the CSR field, and the role of the PR profession going forward in this will be paramount. See Chapter 9 for a more in-depth discussion of this emerging field of communications activity.

Improve Diversity and Inclusion

In a multicultural society, PR professionals need to understand and reflect the diverse racial, religious, and sexual orientation differences in the workplace and in their strategies and tactics. For employers, the industry is well past the point where there is an excuse for a lack of diversity. Whereas in the past the contributions of female and minority professionals might have been overlooked, today’s companies and PR firms are actively seeking diversity in their employee base to more accurately reflect the marketplace they are trying to serve. While that is a positive step, clearly more work needs to be done.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020a), the demographics of advertising, marketing, and PR jobs in the United States indicate that 9.9% are held by African Americans/Blacks and 13.6% by Hispanics/Latinos. This compares to the demographics of the U.S. population that indicate it is 14% Black and 17% Hispanic for the same period (U.S. Census, 2011).

The diversity hires in the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) are equally low. According to a 2012 report by the U.K. Office of National Statistics, 14% of the British population have minority or ethnic backgrounds, but only 9% of U.K. PR practitioners identify themselves as being from these groups, according to research from the Public Relations Consultants Association (Stimson, 2013).

Many industry groups—including PRSA, the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), the Page Society, and the PR Council—recognize that to be successful the industry must have employees who reflect all of society.

Clearly, to be effective at delivering messages, motivating behavior, and influencing public opinion, PR professionals (and companies) need to be representative of the audiences they are trying to reach. Simply translating copy or messages into different languages or using different models or celebrities to endorse products is not sufficient. More work needs to be done in this important area.

Globalization

Given the rate of change globally and the ever-present nature of social media, the world is now a very small, interconnected place. Events—good or bad—in one part of the world become known, discussed, and debated around the globe in a matter of minutes. Each day brings another example of this new reality. There are no unique, “local” markets anymore, and PR professionals must be aware and capable of managing this reality. Cision, a media monitoring service and source of industry thought leadership, said in a recent post, “PR is facing challenges. But they’re NOT insurmountable,” and suggests that glocalization—thinking globally and acting locally—is the new normal (Mireles, 2014).

Stakeholders all over the world, and especially in key markets, expect a meaningful relationship with companies with whom they do business or who operate in their country. The media and public in these areas expect a culturally aware attitude and a level of transparency and accountability from corporations that was not the case a few years ago. The penalty for not meeting these requirements can be harsh—both in terms of sales and profits as well as reputation, government support, or market acceptance. Strategic CSR, as we will learn later, is a key tool to meet this new global reality.

Scenario Outcome

At the beginning of this chapter, you were presented with a scenario and a challenge. Put yourself in the place of Belle Moskowitz and make recommendations to the developer of the Empire State Building and the City of New York to manage public concerns about a massive construction project in Midtown Manhattan.

Specifically, you were asked to think of how to (a) reassure the public and demonstrate that the project was moving ahead smoothly and safely and (b) alleviate public fears about accidents or disruption of city life.

Several questions were suggested to guide your thinking as you read through the chapter:

1. What tactics would you use to manage the issues and prevent a crisis?
2. How could the company be more open and responsive?
3. How would you minimize public concerns about safety and disruption?
4. How would this case be different today versus in the 1930s?

As you discuss these questions with your classmates, consider how Moskowitz responded. What did she recommend?

In a breakthrough strategy for the time, she convinced company management to be open to the media and the public throughout the construction phase of the project.

Specifically, she recommended the company provide frequent, scheduled access of the news media—news photographers in particular—to the construction site so they could take photographs to show the steady progress and highlight the skilled tradesmen doing the complex and challenging work.

One iconic photo from the time featured a group of construction workers casually seated on a steel beam high above the city, taking a lunch break. This photo has been published and featured in the media, on souvenirs, posters, and any number of promotional items since it was first published.

This groundbreaking tactic of providing access and transparency reassured the public that the workers were capable and safe, showed the citizens the project was progressing nicely, and helped build excitement (rather than concern) about the project. Reportedly, the positive publicity and goodwill this strategy created lasted right up until the grand opening.

By being open and transparent, Moskowitz provided an early example of strategic issues management and how it can minimize—or even prevent—a crisis. We will delve deeper into this key topic in Chapter 12. For now, it is important to recognize the strategic thinking displayed by an early PR pioneer to facilitate the construction and development of an international landmark.

WRAP UP

This chapter covered a lot of topics, introduced some key figures, and summarized many years of history. You learned how communications has been a part of civilization as long as there have been different groups of people—rulers and subjects, activists and citizens, politicians and voters, and businesses and customers—trying to understand and influence each other.

You read short profiles of some of the well-known leaders of the modern era of PR, including Bernays, Lee, and Page, and you discovered other PR professionals—minorities and women in particular—who made major contributions. You then took an in-depth look at the PR agency business and its pioneers as well as learned about lesser known, but equally important, women and African Americans who have made significant contributions to its growth.

The chapter closed with a look at the issues impacting PR in the next 5 to 10 years and the social issues that will challenge PR professionals throughout the rest of the 21st century.

KEY TERMS

Media Tour 37
Modern Era of PR 30

Press Event/Publicity Stunt 29
Pro Bono Work 33

THINK ABOUT IT

The issue of diversity and inclusion continues to be a challenge for the PR profession. Since the early 1900s, minorities and women have been underrepresented or underappreciated for their contributions. The problem is evident by the disconnect between the demographics of the U.S. population and the employment trends in the PR industry.

As a reminder, in the section of this chapter outlining key challenges for the future of the PR profession, you read the following statistic: *According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020a), the demographics of advertising, marketing, and PR jobs in the United States indicate that 9.9% are held by African Americans/Blacks and 13.6% by Hispanics/Latinos. This compares to a population in the United States that is 14% Black and 17% Hispanic.*

Your challenge is to break into groups, discuss this issue, and develop proposals on how the PR industry can improve its diversity and inclusion performance. This might take the form of CSR initiatives between companies catering to minority customers or women and/or affiliations with nonprofits such as the United Negro College Fund, La Raza, or the National Organization for Women.

Prepare a short memo listing your ideas and an outline of a plan of action to discuss in class to address this challenge.

WRITE LIKE A PRO

In this chapter, you read a lot about the history of PR, notably the modern era and some industry leaders whose contributions helped create the PR practices of today.

You were also introduced to The Museum of Public Relations, an organization in New York City that highlights the leaders of the early days of PR. The Museum of PR has an amazing collection of artifacts exhibited there from PR professionals—many of them people of color or women. It can be accessed online (www.prmuseum.org) and is a must visit for PR students, scholars, and practitioners when you are in New York.

Visit the site and prepare a short "backgrounder" that summarizes the work of a featured pioneer that appeals to you. The document should be suitable in style and format to one that could be submitted to a reporter seeking coverage or a potential donor to encourage their interest in the museum and its mission.

Note: A backgrounder is a short overview that provides information to encourage the reader to learn more about a given topic. In this case, you could describe the purpose and history of the Museum, as well as your chosen personality in detail, and then summarize the information and materials available there to learn more. You should start by visiting the museum's website at www.prmuseum.org.

CASE STUDY

Johnson & Johnson's Tylenol Crisis

As noted earlier in this chapter, Burson-Marsteller (BM) advised Johnson & Johnson during the now-famous Tylenol crisis—a case regarded as one of the classic historical examples of managing a crisis properly.

In the fall of 1982, random packages of Tylenol Extra-Strength already on store shelves were opened and had cyanide-laced capsules placed in them by an unidentified individual or individuals. The perpetrator(s) then resealed the containers and put them back on the shelves of several pharmacies and food stores in the Chicago area, where they were sold.

Seven people died after ingesting the poison capsules they thought were Tylenol. Johnson & Johnson, parent company of McNeil Consumer Products Company, which makes Tylenol,

suddenly, and with no warning, had to explain to the world why its trusted product was killing people (Ten Berge, 1990).

Research and Strategy

Robert Andrews, assistant director for PR at Johnson & Johnson at the time, recalls how the company reacted in the first days of the crisis:

We got a call from a Chicago news reporter. He told us that the medical examiner there had just given a press conference—people were dying from poisoned Tylenol. He wanted our comment. As it was the first knowledge we had here in this department, we told him we knew nothing about it. In that first call we learned more from the reporter than he did from us. (Ten Berge, 1990)

Johnson & Johnson Chair James Burke reacted to the media coverage by forming a seven-member strategy team, and he engaged their PR agency, Burson-Marsteller. The strategy guidance to the agency from Burke was, first, "How do we protect the people?" and, second, "How do we save this product?"

Execution

Johnson & Johnson, acting on the advice of its agency and internal team, moved ahead by stopping the production and advertising of Tylenol and withdrawing all Tylenol capsules from the store shelves in Chicago and the surrounding area. After finding two more contaminated bottles elsewhere, Johnson & Johnson ordered a national withdrawal of every capsule (Cutlip et al., 1994).

By withdrawing all Tylenol, even though there was little chance of discovering more cyanide-laced tablets, Johnson & Johnson showed that they were not willing to risk the public's safety, even if it cost the company millions of dollars. The result was the public viewing Tylenol as the unfortunate victim of a malicious crime (Cutlip et al., 1994).

Subsequently, Johnson & Johnson announced the creation of new triple-safety-seal packaging with a press conference at the manufacturer's headquarters. Tylenol became the first product in the industry to use the new tamper-resistant packaging just 6 months after the crisis occurred (Ten Berge, 1990).

Evaluation

Throughout the crisis, more than 100,000 separate news stories ran in U.S. newspapers, and there were hundreds of hours of national and local television coverage. A postcrisis study by Johnson & Johnson said that more than 90% of the American population had heard of the Chicago deaths due to cyanide-laced Tylenol within the first week of the crisis. Two news clipping services found more than 125,000 news clippings on the Tylenol story. One of the services reported that this story had been given the widest U.S. news coverage to date since the assassination of President John F. Kennedy (Kaplan, 2005).

Scholars and PR practitioners have come to recognize Johnson & Johnson's handling of the Tylenol crisis as the top example for success when confronted with a threat to an organization's existence. Ten Berge (1990) lauds the case in the following manner:

The Tylenol crisis is without a doubt the most exemplary case ever known in the history of crisis communications. Any business executive, who has ever stumbled into a public relations ambush, ought to appreciate the way Johnson & Johnson responded to the Tylenol poisonings. They have effectively demonstrated how major business has to handle a disaster. (p. 19)

Engage

- Explore Johnson & Johnson's CSR website at www.jnj.com/caring/citizenship-sustainability to see how it communicates what it's achieved.
- Drawing from its website, put together a list of the internal and external stakeholders touched by its current CSR activity. How are employees involved?

Discuss

- In the Tylenol poisoning case, there is no discussion of how the news and the company's response were communicated to Johnson & Johnson's employees. While this no doubt happened then, how would you recommend a company faced with a similar crisis now manage its internal messaging?
- Should the company have considered reworking the packaging and handling of all its over-the-counter medications? Or was this just a random incident?
- If you worked for a competitor of Johnson & Johnson, how might you have recommended your company respond? What, if anything, should your company have done to make sure it was not the next victim of this criminal behavior?

Source: Crisis Communications Strategies, n.d.

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