

Disparities between UAE and other Public Relations Professionals: Challenges, Opportunities, and Cultural Obstacles

Dr. Badreya Al-Jenaibi¹

Abstract

UAE companies lack adequate public relations strategies and practices, causing businesses to suffer from both financial and reputational declines. The significance of public relations strategies is clear on international platforms. Considering the need to establish PR strategies, several UAE companies emphasize this untouched area and spend increasingly more time and money in its domain. This study investigates the cause of missing links regarding public relations strategies since soon the topic will be addressed internationally and it is a growing field in the UAE. A qualitative research strategy was used, 100 questionnaires were distributed among PR practitioners and both primary and secondary data were used to maximize conclusive results. Results highlight the role of public relations practitioners worldwide in comparison to those in the UAE, especially regarding public opinions of the functions of public relations. Suggestions for UAE companies are discussed.

Introduction

Public relations (PR) is as old as society itself (Tye, 2001), understandable given what people comprehend PR entails. PR deals with the public and target markets within it, but how do companies ensure the services they provide are in demand? PR is an industry that provides the public with positive facts about services provided by whomever it represents, the purpose of which is to persuade the public, investors, partners, employees, and other stakeholders to maintain a viewpoint of a company, and its leaders, products, and political decisions (Basu, Miroshnik & Uchida, 2007; Botan, 2006). PR varies from press releases to speaking at conferences, but PR services have also varied greatly over time and with the evolution of society (Lautenslager, 2003).

¹ Associate Professor, Mass Communication Department, College of Humanities and Social Science, United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), Al Ain, P.O. Box 15551, UAE.

The United States leads in PR, with pay scales ranging from USD\$20,000 to \$90,000 per annum (Ray Jackson, 2001). Close behind is Britain, with an average annual salary of USD\$67,000,.

Most interesting is that both of these countries are outbid at business hubs in favor of the UAE, thus exposing a problem (Ayish, 2005). The UAE recently erupted as a worldwide center of business, the reason for which is simple; it is an attractive land, free from religious struggles and political outcries (Ayish & Badran, 1997). The UAE was insulated from current global economic crises that influenced the rest of the world (The UAE National Media Council, 2014). The country is a target for companies and professionals searching for new markets and opportunities (Al-Jenaibi, 2014b). This is what provides the UAE with much of its strength, but it also presents many challenges, especially regarding PR and communication (Kirat, 2006).

A common misconception is that PR deals with only customers, but PR's largest contribution concerns internal employees (Kirat, 2005). PR commonly addresses employees, keeping them satisfied, happy, and working. UAE companies, especially those in Dubai (Al-Jenaibi, 2013a), often employ people who represent 80 nationalities (Inter Nations, 2014). PR does create positive public images, but internal problems hinder everyday progress. Internal communications challenge companies (Arthur, 2005), influencing customers' opinions about those companies. Eighty nationalities in a company mean customers represent a variety of nationalities too, so communication must consider a range of language and cultural disparities (Ray Jackson 2001). Factory managers commonly face communication difficulties when they speak Arabic, for example, but a workforce speaks a mix of Arabic, English, Urdu, and German. Consumers face similar difficulties; a tour-guide company plays a commercial on a local television channel in Arabic, but only 20% of viewers are Arabian. The advertising campaign is largely futile, with much wasted resources and effort. There is clearly disconnect between consumers and companies. Considering this need of establishing PR strategies, several UAE companies emphasize on this untouched area, and are willing to spend time and money in the PE domain. This study investigates causes of this missing link, highlighting that soon PR will be addressed internationally as a rising field in the UAE.

Problem Statement

According to Astbury (2013), senior managers in the UAE—many of whom are Emirati and connected well within the country—regard PR as a cheap form of advertising, believing PR concerns issuing press releases. They expect that the media must cover all news from a company, no matter how mundane or uninteresting to the population. Local media oblige by printing every press release they receive verbatim, spelling mistakes and all, regardless of the news value. This makes it difficult for PR practitioners to argue that this form of PR is ineffective. In many companies, one PR person is sufficient to churn press releases and arrange ribbon-cutting ceremonies. They gain media coverage for their companies, and senior executives are satisfied. This problem perpetuates because not enough people know there is something wrong with this approach to PR, and there exist more effective alternatives. For too many UAE companies, PR is managed by a sales and marketing professional, an enthusiastic but inexperienced and unqualified individual, or outsourced to an agency managed by someone in finance, marketing, or perhaps the CEO. Although there have been some moves in the right direction, it will be a long time before UAE PR becomes something the country is proud of. The industry must educate people about what PR is and what practitioners realistically can and cannot achieve for companies. The first line of attack should be recruitment; PR professionals are often hired based on social media experience.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following questions: What is the significance of implementing PR strategies in UAE organizations?, and What is the current state of PR in UAE companies?

Research Hypothesis

The hypotheses tested in this study are: a) PR strategies endow organizations with financial benefits and b) PR strategies endow organizations with reputational benefits.

Literature Review

Searching for literature on the topic, it is obvious that UAE companies lack PR strategies, the reason the topic is ripe for further exploration. Government agencies drive much PR, but growing private sectors, education, NGOs, and an influx of people demand increasingly open communication (Al Hashimi, 2002). The UAE, particularly Dubai, is one of the region's primary "PR hubs, with sizeable communities, in-house operations, freelancers, and agencies. Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia also have a developing capacity, as do Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt" (Hill, 2011, p. 43). Dubai provides much consultancy to Abu Dhabi, though this is changing, with more agencies opening in the capital and corporate teams taking on some PR responsibilities. PR as a concept, and its association with UAE companies, is explored in this literature review.

Definition of PR

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) states, "Public relations are concerned with or devoted to creating mutual understanding among groups and institutions." (p.1) PRSA recognizes the place of groups and institutions in the PR process, and it admits that these entities have interests that must be protected. It also presupposes streamlining these benefits for mutual good, and this mutuality implies that PR professionals are intermediaries between an organization and the public (Kirat, 2005). PR must align the interests of these two parties for mutual advantage, conducted by convincing the organization that PR place the broad interests of the public before the interests of the organization (Smith, 2004). By doing this, the organization is serving its own interests indirectly, and hence PR has enlightened self-interest.

Another definition is that offered by Broom et al. (2012), a book that is popular in the United States as a bible of PR. According to them, PR is the "management function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics upon whom its success depends." (p. 3) The portion of the definition "upon whom its success depends" (p.3) is noteworthy since many organizations have not yet recognized this function of PR. A company's success or failure depends considerably on its relationship with various public actors, and the public is another module.

Frank Jefkins, a British author, states, "Public relations consist of all forms of planned communication both inward and outward between an organization and its publics for the purpose of achieving objectives concerning mutual understanding" (Jefkins, 1983, p. 1). Jefkins' definition includes a term common to many PR definitions: mutual understanding. Mutual understanding is a broad concept that "every organization must seek to establish" (Olusegun, Ofulue, Uyo and Onwubere, p. 141). Inward and outward communication implies two-way communication involving both the organization and its various public actors (Lancaster, 2012). A final definition is referred to commonly as the Mexican statement, adopted at the first World Congress of National Public Relations Associations held in Mexico in 1978. It states, "Public Relations is the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organizational leaders as well as planning and implementing a programmed of action that will serve the interest of not only the organization but also that of its publics." (Udomisor & Osademe, 2012, p.1) The definition is broad, multidisciplinary, and all-embracing, suggesting PR borrows knowledge and expertise from other fields such as psychology, politics, sociology, language, etc (Al-Jenaibi, 2014D). PR is an art because it involves artistic skills, fine arts, language, writing, public speaking, etc. It is a social science because it uses social scientific instruments to understand and predict human behaviors. It attempts to understand its environment and relate to it mutually. PR monitors, surveys, and researches issues and occurrences in the environment (Krat, 1998). It advises an organization so that its policies accord with public expectations, and implements programs that favor both the organization and the public in a win-win outcome.

Significance of PR in Organizations

The questions asked here is: why do institutions need PR? According to Katib (2013), BIPR defines PR as "the deliberate planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics." (p.1) It must be designed consciously, and planning calls for attention, deliberation, research, anticipation, analysis, and consequences. The public wants to hear a good story, and good PR is the telling of a good story; the better the story, the better the public's acceptance, and thus better PR. If a story is especially appealing to potential clients, the organization experiences a PR breakthrough. In this case, communication with a target market might be very public, and PR occasionally influences the public, especially true for political action groups, associations, and other groups.

Sometimes PR is synonymous with community relations. In larger, publicly held firms, a community affairs professional is a director of investor relations. Investors are public entities, so PR is appropriate (IPR, 2013). According to Kirat (2006), like other countries, the UAE needs PR because its companies must engage in awareness marketing of both the company itself and its products. PR is a part of marketing, and is cost effective when targeting markets (Hiebert, 2004). PR is about raising a company's profile, managing its reputation, and building relationships with people interested in the business, all of which are vital to success. Through media (both traditional and online), PR can increase a company's profile, raise awareness of what the company does, educate target audiences, and position the company as an expert in the field. This, in turn, generates enquiries and sales (CIPR, 2013).

UAE PR Agencies

The number of PR agencies operating in the region measures the growth of PR. Although the first PR agency (part of an international network) was set up more than 25 years ago, major growth has occurred in the last decade (see table below). Market value is more difficult to gauge, with estimates ranging from USD\$500 million to \$1 billion, depending on what is included in the count (retainers, media monitoring fees, event management, print production, etc.) (Hill, 2011). The table shows the state of PR by comparing the number of PR agencies in various areas. This is not exclusive to the UAE, but includes other countries to provide a fair assessment of the region.

PR agencies in the Middle East, 2006 to 2010: Reliable data are scarce on this topic; there exists no centralized directory of PR practitioners, or a distinct category for licensing a PR agency unless it is set up in a free trade zone. Memberships in professional associations such as the Middle East Public Relations Association (MEPRA, 2013) or the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Chapter of the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) runs in the low hundreds even though there must be at least two to three thousand people who conduct some form of PR as part of their professional roles (Gregory, 2004). Non-profit trade associations are new in the UAE, though their value is being recognized slowly. Traditionally, PR spending is subsumed into advertising budgets, either by advertising agencies adding PR as part of their integrated services or when media outlets promise free PR if advertising is purchased (Barsky & Nash, 2004). Although the situation is improving, a correlation exists between coverage and advertising, particularly regarding specialist magazines that rely on advertising revenue.

Paying for coverage, whether cash or incentives, is as evident here as it is in the rest of the world, though a number of media houses have clear policies on gift giving, which helps set standards.

Like the rest of the world, the UAE struggles to develop a standard approach to communication, whether it is PR, marketing, etc. PR education varies from college to college and academican to academican, with textbooks sourced from the United States that have nearly no relevance in terms of case studies. MEPR uses the PR definition from the Institute for Public Relations—a sustained dialogue with one's public. The version usually practiced is limited to media relations with a local twist; often there is one media relations expert in each agency whose role is to manage press relationships, meaning only one conduit for information to media.

Views of the PR Professionals

Sustained effort means it is insufficient to start a plan; it must be carried through to a logical end. This is difficult among an unstable economy, political instability, and other factors (Lautenslager, 2003, Al-Jenaibi, 2014c). Following are the most common misconceptions in the field.

PR is about being friendly. Many people believe PR is nothing more than being friendly to others, a role that anyone who is good-looking and has a pleasant personality can play for an organization. These are, of course, "good attributes for a PR professional to have, but it takes much more than that to be a PR professional" (Comcowich, 1999, p.2).

PR requires good communications skills, both oral and written, and PR is not a superficial preoccupation, but a serious profession requiring sufficient academic preparation, training, and work experience. "PR professionals need not be pleasant and likable all the time" (Courtney, 2014, p.3); they can and should be serious and tough, yet diplomatic when the situation calls for it.

PR is an art. Some people believe PR is an art, a task that requires creativity and imagination, and even intuition. PR is part art, and requires all of these things, but it is also a science; professional PR is both, not just one or the other.

"PR does not entail only coming up with brilliant, out-of-the-box ideas" (Altucher, 2013, p. 4). It involves knowing how to bring these ideas to reality through a systemic approach involving research, planning, budgeting, project management, and evaluation of results.

PR is just publicity. Some people believe PR is about achieving as much exposure in the media as possible. Publicity is just one of the tools PR uses; it is a primary tool sometimes, but one of many to be used as needed and when appropriate. There are times when being low key and avoiding the limelight is the best course.

PR is the same as advertising. Some people, even those in business, believe PR is synonymous with advertising. "Advertising involves producing advertisements about a company's products for print, radio, television, and other media" (Parekh, 2012, p. 3). PR is about gaining positive coverage for a company in the media by convincing journalists of the newsworthiness of information or messages conveyed to the public through them. This is in addition to using various tools to convey a company's messages through, for example, special events, speeches, and various publications such as flyers, pamphlets, books, films, etc.

Only big companies need PR. Some people believe start-up companies do not need PR, and only big companies do. However, new companies need PR most to get their organizations and products known and supported by the public. "It is vital for new companies to get expert PR advice from the beginning" (King, 2013, p. 1). A PR misstep early in the life of a company can have long-term repercussions, which may take a long time for the firm to recover from.

PR is just a staff function. Many CEOs believe that the role of PR is unimportant; it can be delegated to a junior officer or staff member in a human resources marketing department who has some communications skills.

Successful corporations realize that PR should be a management function, perhaps even within the top management team. "If the CEO of a corporation does not have any PR sense or does not listen to PR advice, PR gaffes are likely, subjecting the company to public criticism or lawsuits that could cost the company enormous fines or damages" (Granneman, 2006, p. 2) .

No ethics in PR. The worst misconception about PR is that it contains no ethics; anything goes as long as it promotes or protects the company's interests, or helps achieve its objectives. "This is an unfair indictment of the profession". "Although some PR professionals are unscrupulous" (Hallahan, 2004, P. 6), most are similar to professionals in other professions; condemning a person because of his/her profession is stereotyping. They fail occasionally like all people, but are capable of reverting to the right path when they do something incorrectly. PR professionals are commonly perceived as engaging in lying and deception. "The worst behavior attributable to PR professional is that they accentuate a company's positive attributes, but that is to be expected" (Hyde , 2012, p. 1). If found to be lying, they are being counterproductive since the truth is usually discovered eventually, and they would lose credibility among the media. PR professionals are commonly accused of trying to corrupt media, politicians, and government authorities through bribery. This could backfire because again, the truth is usually discovered in the end. Honest and ethical elements in the media and government will denounce or expose them, tarnishing not only their reputations, but the company's too.

PR is for need only. Some people believe a company should use PR only when needed, such as when launching a new product, celebrating a milestone, or confronting a crisis. "Having permanent PR counsel is tantamount to having someone who knows the company's history and its products well" (Lawrence, Martyn & Andrew, 2003, p. 158). Such a professional would have plans in place to deal with PR situations such as crises when quick responses are required. "We do not expect PR misconceptions to disappear from one or several articles that dispel them" (Miller, 2014, p. 1). PR professionals must persist with PR for PR through all media, though that might be insufficient. Perceptions of the PR profession depend on how PR professionals in the UAE conduct themselves over time. Nothing replaces performance; with PR as with most things in life, actions speak louder than words. These problems haunt the PR industry and deter its functioning, but other issues might be more important.

Struggles UAE PR Professionals Face

This section highlights PR misconceptions while grounding them with field evidence. This section is highly specific to the roles PR professionals play in the UAE. A primary issue in PR is insights into the extent to which thoughts and actions of practitioners are founded or influenced by academic knowledge and research.

"Understanding of the relationship between theories/research and knowledge/tools a practitioner needs is lacking" (Shaw, 2002, p.11) . According to previous studies done by Ayish & Badran (1997) and Al-Jenaibia (2014), they believed that the majority of PR appears to be based on intuitive or experiential learning rather than grounding in or drawing from academic knowledge. PR scholars such as Abbas (2001) and Hill (2011) indicate that absence of a strong academic foundation to guide the work of many practitioners influences a further professionalization of the discipline. The greatest problem in PR is its misconceptions. Kirat (2006) studies the PR in the UAE and he argued that when asked about lack of PR in their firms, several UAE companies, including large, multinationals, deflected the question with claims that were similar to misconceptions. But still other scholars like Badran, Turk and Walters (2003) stated that the practice of public relations in the UAE, was developed in a short history. Taylor (2001) believed that Arab world needs more PR researches and studies because the education and PR ethical issues that faced PR professionals in the Arab world are highly important for the PR and field development. Kirat (2006) and Hill (2011) agreed that the development of public relations companies in the UAE reflected the importance of economic activity in the country and affected the growth and the need for PR as a field to increase the UAE economic. Although, Badran Turk and Walters (2003) published that PR people in the UAE which is a small and young country, the country faced with the unfamiliarity of PR practice in a downturn, and "risk abandoning any code of ethics and resorting to the most virulent forms of press agency" (Jaouhari, 2012, p.10). So, the PR field is still new in the UAE but it was developed very fast in a small country such as the UAE.

MEPRA (2013) published that with an increase in the number of courses institutions offer, students have greater choices of degrees, but essential for them is choosing something that bodes well for future jobs; within PR, most employers are not looking for a PR degree, but instead the right attributes to start at the bottom. Internship opportunities are increasing, but most are unpaid. For practitioners seeking professional development, few options exist beyond local, public courses that are usually priced above what an individual is able to pay, and courses and diplomas offered overseas by such as bodies as the British Chartered Institute of Public Relations, International Association of Business Communicators, and MEPRA have tentatively created workshops and boot camps that senior members deliver. Although priced far lower, attendance is low even though employers report they want to train staff members.

The most cited reason is lack of time. Institutional development is arduous; practitioners generally hold local academia in low esteem, though many opportunities for greater collaboration exist. MEPRA held a practitioner/educator conference in January 2011—the Middle East's first PR conference, supported by Zayed University—as a starting point to foster greater dialogue between the two groups. Student chapters are not yet a feature of university life, but MEPRA championed the first PR student day in November 2010, with a second scheduled for 2011. An intra-university competition is scheduled for the next academic year, and a number of initiatives are underway to benchmark university courses. Thus, the easiest solution is to demonstrate, at the undergraduate level, the importance of PR, and create a market so more people study it, are granted degrees, and enter the field.

Fitzpatrick and Gauthier(2001) created a Responsible Advocacy theory, they believed that, to practice the public relations in a best way ethics are the basic of professional responsibility. Ethics includes: "Practitioners greatest need for ethical guidance is in the reconciling of their conflicting roles of professional advocate and social conscience. Public relations professionals best serve society by serving the special interests of his or her client or employer. First loyalty is always to client, but also have a responsibility to voice the opinions of organizational stakeholders" (p. 1). Fitzpatrick and Gauthier argued that the importance of the theory comes from, the importance of public relations, the Responsible Advocacy theory allows PR practitioners to understand how and what makes public relations work. They argued that PR agencies evolution over the world, create a competitive companies. The customers are the heart of the PR operations, they are strategically important. because the PR organization tries to understand the needs of the customers by using appropriate communication tools and research methods. "Responsible advocacy seeks to marry the ethical identity of public relations professional as advocate and social conscience, two roles that have consistently been at odds with each other" (Cox, 2006, p.2). According to Fitzpatrick and Gauthier(2001), The theory of responsible advocacy is guidance for PR people. Definitely, there are three necessary codes required to be followed. First, a public relations practitioners must be a aware about the harms or damages and benefits of possible action. Second, trust and respect persons. Third, "a public relations professional must see that all rewards and difficulties be equally allocated" Cox, 2006, p.3).

In general, the Fitzpatrick & Gauthier theory or model focuses on the public relations people "being able to serve the interests of clients while simultaneously and equally serving the interests of society at large" Cox, 2006, p.3).

Methods

Research Approach

A qualitative method was used as the research approach in this study. Since this study examines employee behaviors and perceptions regarding the significance of PR in organizations, qualitative research was beneficial because it is appropriate when the purpose is to discover underlying motives of human behaviors. Qualitative research helps researchers emphasize natural settings, perspectives of human behaviors, grounded theories, and processes that provide results that are effective in large groups (Woods., 2006, Al-Jenaibi, 2013b). Qualitative research endowed this study with subjective assessments of attitudes, behaviors, and opinions. Qualitative research offers an opportunity for in-depth examinations, easing use and interpretation of subjective data. It is not limited to fixed, definable variables, which help build new theories and open new areas of research.

Research Strategy

The method of collecting data for the exploration of research objectives represents the research strategy (Creswell & Clark, 2010).

Common strategies include questionnaire, ethnographies, action research, experiments, case studies, and longitudinal studies (Ardilly & Tillé, 2006). For this study, a questionnaire was the most viable research strategy, considering the objectives of the study. The purpose behind selection of a questionnaire strategy is identification of perceptions and ideas regarding issues PR professionals face in diverse organizational environments. This technique was used because local employees are accessed easily. The questionnaire was able to ask questions personally to employees to gain extra knowledge and responses from subjects. Electronic responses allow only answers given to subjects, limiting answers. When questionnaire distributed, subjects sometimes talk about topics they do not wish to disclose in writing.

Research Instrument

A questionnaire rather than a survey was chosen to employ a qualitative method, allowing a more natural method to gauge data and affording the ability to examine change processes longitudinally. By interviewing and observing people, the method provided a better understanding on people's meanings. With an abundance of valuable information available, data, ideas, and issues can be adjusted as they emerge, so it is a better instrument for researchers who want to generate theories. By talking to and observing people, the process occurs naturally in its own environment rather than in an artificially created surrounding. The questionnaire method was also employed since PR agents are few at each institution, and at several locations, no such agents exist. The procedure started with face-to-face interviews, and then questionnaires were distributed among participants. The final stage involved observing subjects and using social-help methods to gauge understanding of the interviewee, and responses were recorded only after a participant understood the question.

Sampling Technique

A random sampling method was used in which personnel working as PR professionals were chosen as subjects. The UAE is a small country and PR offices are very limited, the sample size was 100, selected from various UAE regions. The reason behind selecting respondents from the regions was to measure the effectiveness of PR strategies in multinational organizations.

Several workplaces are included such as Al-Ain Distribution Company , Ministry of Labor, Al-Ain Municipality , Abu-Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Al-Ain Municipality, Fujairah Municipality, Abu-Dhabi Food Control Authority (ADFCA), Dubai Health Authority, Sharjah Ladies Club, Social Affairs Center, Fujairah Radio Station, Fujairah TV Station, Fujairah Airport, Fujairah Police Department, DP World, Immigration, Al-Futtaim Motors, Etisalat (UAE Telecommunication Company), Umm Al-Quwain Bank (Ajman Branch), Dubai Islamic Bank, Health insurance companies DAMAN, National Bank of Abu-Dhabi, HSBC, Invest Bank, Two four 54, ADIB, Al-Khaleej Bank, Iran Bank in Al-Ain, UAE University , schools and hospitals

Sample Demographics

Questionnaires were distributed among 100 PR professionals who worked in PR positions in various organizational capacities. They were between 30 and 45 years old, and held BA and BS degrees, except one who held a master's degree.

Theme Analysis

In this section, research themes are analyzed based on questionnaire data.

Theme	Present	Respondents' comments
The goal of the PR position	Identified by 75% of respondents	PR is a two-way process and its strategies connect customers to the workforce.
Functions of PR	80% agreed that to achieve the goals of PR	some functions should be applied
Responsibilities and duties	60% agreed that PR should create a corporate image	PR strategies should include organizing events
Features of PR agents	100% PR agent distinguishes PR practitioners by dealing with all segments of society.	Creativity and experience are necessary for a good PR professional
Stresses and issues faced by PR agents	More than 70% of respondents agreed that PR agents are time conscious.	PR agents must manage with low budgets and little help from colleagues.
External and internal communication	65% agreed that PR incorporates both external and internal communications.	communication is different based on the organization
The experiences and qualifications	80% accepted that the most important qualification for a PR employee is a bachelor's degree in PR.	other qualifications include experience with computers, design skills, speaking English, and etiquette
Racial discrimination between citizen practitioners of PR and foreigners	90% reported there exists no racial discrimination between citizen and foreign PR practitioners.	Racial discrimination in some companies such as allocation of privileges, manifested as alien possession of private houses and salaries higher than citizens'.
Encouraging graduates of PR.	All interviewees encouraged new graduates	graduates understand that the industry is young and experiences many difficulties.
Problems PR practitioners face	70% stated there are some problems that PR practitioners experience	Examples are understanding English, satisfying people; assignments that detract from PR and working more hours outside of normal work times.
Demand for PR jobs	95% understood that there is local interest in the field.	A PR job is enjoyable, and employees are helpful to each other.

The goal of the PR position. Identified by 75% of respondents, a good PR agent sees customer satisfaction rising to the forefront, while keeping all employees happy. Respondents agreed that PR is a two-way process of communication to resolve conflicts and keep the workforce operating. Several respondents inferred that they act as the human part of a large machine that is the company. Thus, PR strategies connect customers to the workforce and stakeholders. Their goal is to create an internal marketing culture within the organization and foster mutually beneficial, long-term relationships with customers and other groups of people.

Functions of PR. The majority of respondents (almost 80%) agreed that to achieve the goals mentioned above, some functions should be applied by a) introducing the audience to the institution to express its goals and policies, and provide products that contain simple language, informing the audience to changes in institution policies for better cooperative opportunities between the audience and the institution; b) helping the audience with decision-making by providing all information needed so opinions are based on facts; c) make certain all incidences are true in shape and content; d) delivering thoughts and directions from the audience to higher managers to create collaborative policies, and delivering truthful images about the audience's thoughts and directions regarding institution policy; e) following up on feedback concerning the institution and its services; f) encouraging a sense of belonging in workers, increasing their loyalty by examining complaints, and fostering cooperation regarding achieving goals and their cultural and economic desires to create company ambassadors; f) encouraging communication among administrative levels; g) assuring institutional goals and operations meet customers' satisfaction; h) working as a coordinator among various administrations to create harmony among them and the external audience; i) communicating within the institution and with other institutions that participate in the same industry or are located on the same community by exchanging press, publications, and other media; j) preserving a society of tradition that achieves good relations between the institution and the public; k) conducting research for PR problem-solving, without relying on speculation, intuition, or generalizations. There are two types of PR communication, external and internal. Internal communication involves supervisors, clerks, managers, stockholders, and the board of directors, and external communication involves the public, those not connected to the organization directly such as the press, government, educators, customers, suppliers ,and the community.

Responsibilities and duties. 60% of respondents agreed that PR should create a corporate image, convey the right message, and ensure customers are attracted to company guidelines, while simultaneously not falsifying information. They also reported that PR strategies should include organizing events both inside and outside company, and PR agents should manage both company and customer files.

Features of PR agents. Nearly all interviewees mentioned that a good PR agent distinguishes him/herself by dealing with all segments of society. A superior agent works hard to be famous, and knowledge of all things in an organization ensures that an agent is superior. Several answers suggested that a good PR professional distinguishes him/herself by demonstrating confidence and pride in his/her work. Creativity and experience are necessary for a good PR professional. Several respondents noted that in today's fast-paced world, a good PR agent works well under pressure and keeps pace with new technology and information.

Stresses and issues faced by PR agents. More than 70% of respondents agreed that PR agents are time conscious and are constantly under pressure to create new and creative approaches. Operating in an underdeveloped profession, PR agents must manage with low budgets and little help from colleagues, and language barriers are a large part of the difficulty. PR agents deal with entire workforces and all consumers; several come from global backgrounds, and thus PR agents must converse in several languages and take care of several cultures. The last issue is lack of a PR work force; one professional works on several tasks at the same time, creating a potential for confusion.

External and internal communication. 65% of respondents agreed that PR incorporates both external and internal communications. With internal communication, all interviewees communicate with managers, employees in PR departments, other departmental employees, department heads, and director. External communication is different based on the organization. Generally, external communication means communicating with other companies, and some PR agents communicate with advertising companies, printing presses, and various community groups. One interviewee worked in an economic development corporation in Alain, the job description for which was *communications and marketing officer*.

He communicated:

The Commercial Affairs Stake Holders (Government Departments, Ministries, Councils and so on...) - Advertisement Companies- Marketing Consultancy Companies- Department of Economic Development: -Al-Ain Branch Employees-All Commercial Affairs Sections (Trade Licenses, Commercial Protection, Centers and Branches, Commercial Relations Department – Abu Dhabi)- Public Relations Department- Communications Department- International Affairs Department. A much expanded reach as we see! UAE, being a global community requires this work and much more.

The experiences and qualifications. According to 80% of respondents, the most important qualification for a PR employee is a bachelor's degree in PR, and other qualifications include experience with computers, design skills, speaking English, and etiquette. They also mentioned personality traits of a good PR employee, including persuasion, courage, respect, patience, coordination/organization, cooperation, time management, communication skills, and leaderships.

Racial discrimination between citizen practitioners of PR and foreigners. Nearly all interviewees (90%) reported there exists no racial discrimination between citizen and foreign PR practitioners. One stated there exists racial discrimination regarding both salaries and promotions, and another reported racial discrimination in some companies such as allocation of privileges, manifested as alien possession of private houses and salaries higher than citizens'.

Encouraging graduates of PR. All interviewees encouraged new graduates because they understand that the industry is young and experiences many difficulties. One claimed to serve the country as a whole, and another reported high self-confidence.

Problems PR practitioners face. According to 70% of respondents, there are some problems that PR practitioners experience commonly: a) understanding English, which makes communication difficult; b) satisfying people; c) additional assignments that detract from PR; d) working more hours outside of normal work times; e) no big problems, but normal problems all organizations face; and f) lack of colleagues, affecting work negatively since no help is available.

Demand for PR jobs. The majority of interviewees understood that there is local interest in the field. PR creates relationships and provides communication bridges, which in turn create a fascinating profession. PR work is renewable, neither routine nor monotonous. A PR job is enjoyable, and employees are helpful to each other, and thus it is an enjoyable profession that should grow.

In conclusion, all the PR practitioners believe that strong communication and clear ethics in any organization is the basic guideline for PR people. Communication management, dividing responsibilities and duties between PR practitioners helps the organization to achieve its goals by classifying and building healthy relationships with publics. The healthier relationship, the more achieving companies goals appear. The strong relationships controls the effectiveness of the public relations function and goals within the organization. Interviewees agreed that long-term value for an organization is in focusing on the process of relationship building rather than on the outcomes of those relationships. In spite of the challenges that face the PR people like low budget, limited time and dealing with different people and backgrounds, PR people are satisfy about achieving their goals by dealing with different internal and external publics. Also, they did not feel any discrimination between citizen and foreign PR practitioners. They believe that PR practisioners have responsablities like create a corporate image, send the right message, and ensure customers are attracted to company guidelines.

Discussion

“Never waste a good crisis” is a popular quote from politicians like President Obama’s Chief of Staff commented in early 2009 (Wolstenholme, 2009, p. 14), and the same goes for public communications. The 2009 restructuring debacle was a useful lesson for organizations—not only those with domestic and international stakeholders—since it demonstrated that absence of communication is not only detrimental to an organization’s reputation, but costly too since banks increased lending costs for Dubai’s projects and withdrew credit. It also highlights how one size does not fit all since local stakeholders had different expectations than expatriate and international audiences, with disparate consequences. It also demonstrated a need to build trust and respect among all stakeholders to act as a buffer during crises. Many expatriate residents would have been willing to stand up for Dubai if there had been a steady source of credible communication in previous years. Having put in many years of hard work and investment, they were unwilling to see the Emirates razed because of a lack of information.

A solution that has the power to fix the situation is simple, though expansive: bringing PR to the grassroots level (i.e., education and college degrees). Hill (2011) agreed that the UAE is a small country which was developed in few decades, the PR departments spread very fast. Many interviewees indicated that their departments are new and they enjoy working in the PR field. All interviewees agreed about the need of PR like what According to Kirat (2006), mentioned, the UAE needs PR because its companies must engage in awareness marketing of both the company itself and its products.

In answering the research question: the current state of PR in UAE companies? Interviewees indicated that with an increase in the number of courses institutions offer, students have greater choices of degrees, but essential for them is choosing something that bodes well for future jobs; within PR, most employers are not looking for a PR degree, but instead the right attributes to start at the bottom. All interviewees agreed that graduates understand that the industry is young and experiences many difficulties. Therefore, Internship opportunities are increasing, but most are unpaid. For practitioners seeking professional development, few options exist beyond local, public courses that are usually priced above what an individual is able to pay, and courses and diplomas offered overseas by such as bodies as the British Chartered Institute of Public Relations, International Association of Business Communicators, and MEPRA have tentatively created workshops and boot camps that senior members deliver. Although priced far lower, attendance is low even though employers report they want to train staff members. In testing the hypotheses in this study a) PR strategies endow organizations with financial benefits b) PR strategies endow organizations with reputational benefits. The researcher finds that PR supported the financial benefits, interviewees believed that 100% PR agent distinguishes PR practitioners by dealing with all segments of society. Also, 60% agreed that PR should create a corporate image which support the company's financial benefits. From the results, the researcher finds that Responsible Advocacy theory is related to this study, the researcher agreed with Fitzpatrick and Gauthier(2001) who indicated that "Practitioners greatest need for ethical guidance is in the reconciling of their conflicting roles of professional advocate and social conscience" (p. 1). The majority of respondents (almost 80%) agreed that to achieve the goals mentioned above, some functions should be applied such as introducing the audience to the institution to express its goals and policies, and provide products that contain simple language, informing the audience to changes in institution policies for better cooperative opportunities between the audience and the institution.

Fitzpatrick and Gauthier(2001) stated that public relations professionals best serve society by serving the special interests of his or her client or employer which match the interviewees, 100% of PR people are dealing with all society.

Limitation:

There are few studies about Public relations in the UAE as a new field in a new country. Previous studies discussed the facts about PR such as Kirat (2005), Badran (2006) and Ayish (2005) but this study explores 100 PR practitioners in the UAE in different organizations. The study is limited because limited previous studies about the PR practitioners, not only in the UAE but also in the Arab world, were published. This study highlights different points about the PR job for PR practitioners, scholars, organizations and students who focused in PR as a field and a job. The study used Qualitative tools that contained statistical information and in-depth data. But still there is a need for further studies about PR strategies, communication tools and roles in the UAE and Arab world. Very few PR topics are published yearly in the Arab and Gulf regions. Additional studies are needed to determine the development of PR and its effect in the societies.

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