

## **The Public Relations Specialist and his Role in the Management of a Private Company in Galati**

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**Abstract:** This paper shows the way in which the specialist in public relations conducts its activity within the private companies of Galati, identifying its role in organizational management. From the theoretical point of view, the paper focuses on definitions of public relations and analyses the role and functions of public relations in an institution and the management of a company. The case study is based on a qualitative analysis. The data collection was conducted through in-depth interview method applied based on a structured guide.

**Keywords:** private company communication policy; internal communication; public image crisis management

### **1. Theoretical Framework**

In the specialized literature there are multiple definitions for public relations that gives us a clear view on the management function of public relations is that given by the authors S. Cutlip, A. Center și Broom G. (1994, p. 16) as being “the management function, identifying, establishing maintaining the relations mutually advantageous between the organization and different public categories, relations on which it depends its success or lack of success. Meanwhile Delia Bălaban (2005, pp. 33-34) defines the public relations within organizations as being a “function of the institution’s management, which is achieved by a systematic and continuous activity in order to create and maintain sympathy, understanding and support atmosphere.

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As for the public relations at the level of the institutions, Paul Marinescu (2003, p. 63) defining the public relations at the level organizations so as: “The domain of public relations is very important, at the level of public institution as it offers the possibility to communicate with the public. Also through the public relations, it can be transmitted the information on the types of activity for the use of individuals and communities, on the activities of public institutions”.

At the level of the company the existence of the public relations’ specialists (Elias, 2009, p. 65) can bring the following benefits: it helps achieve the business objectives; it explains strategies, programs or policies; it increases the visibility in the public sphere; it draws attention to issues of public interest; it encourages debates and discussions knowingly; it helps to change perceptions, opinions and behaviors; it influences attitudes; it motivates the team; it contributes to the implementation of marketing strategies and it increases sales; it contributes to fostering public reputation; it helps regaining credibility; it influences the values of a social group or society as a whole.

Also, the theoretical framework is also based on the analysis conducted by the following experts in the field: Coman, C. (2001); Dagenais, B. (2002); Davis, A. (2008); Doug Newsom, Judy VanSlyke Turk, Dean Kruckeberg. (2003); Gregory, A. (2009); Marconi, J. (2007); Marinescu, V. (2009); Oliver, S. (2004); Rogojinaru, A. (2005); Rus, F. C. (2002); Rus, F. C. (2009); Scott, R. W. (2004); Wilcox, D. L., Ault, Ph. H., Agee, W. K. (2009).

## 2. Methodological Framework

*The purpose* of this case study is to identify the role of PR (public relations specialist) in the management of companies. *The overall objective* is to investigate and present the importance of PR in private companies’ management in Galati.

The case study pursues the following specific objectives:

- The importance of PR in a private company;
- Main attributions and competences of PR in a private company;
- The role of PR in making management decisions;
- Description of collaborations between PR and management;

We consider the role of public relations in business management of a company on: communication management, crisis management, risk management, image and

reputation management, relationships and human resource management, strategic management, etc.

Data collection was conducted through qualitative method of in-depth interview. The interview was conducted based on a structured interview guide on two main themes namely: *Importance of PR in a private company and the role of PR in making management decisions*. Each theme was structured on seven sub-themes.

In terms of the sample, the qualitative analysis focuses on four major private companies in the city of Galati, namely: Danube Business Center<sup>1</sup>, ArcelorMittal<sup>2</sup>, New Harbor Basin<sup>3</sup>, Damen Shipyards<sup>4</sup>. In each of these companies it was interviewed by a representative of the communication department: specialist in marketing department -ArcelorMittal, Senior Director - METALTRADE INTERNATIONAL Port, The New Basin, PR responsible - DAMEN SHIPYARDS, PR responsible - DANUBE BUSINESS CENTER.

### 3. Results and Conclusions

The conclusions of this study are structured into two themes mentioned above along with related sub-themes.

I. For the first theme importance of PR in a private company were followed seven major sub-themes namely:

- *A PR attributions in private companies Galati;*
- *the PR role in the operation of private companies;*
- *the Communication policy;*
- *the internal communication within the company;*
- *The importance of the public image of a company;*
- *Image-building strategy.*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.galtour-dunarea.ro/>.

<sup>2</sup> [http://galati.arcelormittal.com/?sc\\_lang=ro-RO](http://galati.arcelormittal.com/?sc_lang=ro-RO).

<sup>3</sup> <http://metaltrade.ro/ro/contact-port-bazinul-nou>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.damen.com/en/companies/damen-shipyards-galati>.

1. For the first sub-theme *the PR attributions in private companies of Galati*<sup>1</sup> the respondents focused predominantly on *internal communication activities and promotion activities of the institutional image*.

[...] *Focuses on improving the company's reputation among stakeholder-building, both the internal (employees) and external users (suppliers, contractors, authorities, NGOs, media, etc.) [...] by promoting mission and values - R1;*

[...] *Take care of the naval company image [...] - R4*

2. The second sub-theme entitled *the role of the PR in the operation of a private company*<sup>2</sup> brings to the fore a number of roles that the PR must fulfill for the functioning of an organization, such as: *The role of coordinating communication activity and the role of creator and defender of the company's image*. Among the roles mentioned above, it was also emphasized on the fact that the role of a PR is to ensure that the working environment is appropriate and optimal for transmitting information. The PR also must be informed permanently and up to date on all events of interest to the company where they work.

[...] *Creating a positive public image-R2*

[...] *To take care of the company's image-R3*

[...] *Positioning in the local market and in the community. It is a business card with which we go out into the community - R4*

3. In the third sub-theme entitled *communication policy*<sup>3</sup>, the respondents' answers have identified two directions of communication policy adopted by the PRs of the private companies in Galati, namely: *communication policy based on purpose* and *communication policy based on techniques and strategies*. In the first variant, *the communication policy based on purpose*, respondents highlighted a number of guiding principles and moral values in their professional activity such as openness, strengthening local commitment, transparency, honesty, integrity. In the case of the two versions, *the policy-based communication techniques and strategies*, the respondents highlighted a number of techniques and strategies for public relations use in their professional activities such as advertising, the official website of the

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<sup>1</sup> What are the main attributions of the PR in this company?

<sup>2</sup> What is the role of PR in the operation of private companies?

<sup>3</sup> What is the communication policy adopted at the level of the company?

company, online communication materials, promotional communication media. Other respondents considered this communication policy as one of transparency.

[...] *Try to open as much as possible to the community in which we operate in order to strengthen confidence in us, as a social partner - R1*

[...] *Trying to be transparent, to be honest, to communicate the integrity of our services [...] - R4*

4. For the fourth sub-theme *the internal communication within the company*<sup>1</sup>, respondents focused on communication techniques used to disseminate information and events (such as newsletters, information billboards, banners, posters, local intranet, internal magazine), but also *working meetings*.

5. In the fifth sub-themes called *the importance of the public image of a company*<sup>2</sup>, respondents confirmed the importance of a good image of the company as closely related to the role of PR to oversee the image capital. In this sense, a good image and reputation of the company may determine in time the following benefits: *financial growth of the company and the company's long development*.

6. The sixth sub-theme called *image-building strategy*<sup>3</sup> reveals that a company's image is very important for a PR and the image campaigns assume most often approaching specific strategies based on the mission, vision, values and principles of the company. Thus, in terms of strategies used to create a public image of the company, respondents identified the following strategies: *strategies based on communication and image, image reconstruction strategies, strategies based on the company's role in the local community*.

7. The last sub-theme of the structure of the first theme, entitled *the necessities of a PR smooth running of its activity*<sup>4</sup> the respondents said that a necessity is represented by the efficient internal communication. Other respondents felt that the most important needs are *communicating with partners / customers and the need for financial resources*.

[...] *Direct communication with management by adopting a uniform and consistent vision. - R1*

<sup>1</sup> How is achieved the internal communication in your company?

<sup>2</sup> How important is the public image of a company?

<sup>3</sup> What is the strategy used in building the public image of your company?

<sup>4</sup> What are the needs of PR for the smooth running of its activity in a company?

*Knowing in detail the activities of each department; Permanent information of the PR department on the achievements of the company and establishing a strategy for promotion; R2*

*[...] The quality of those involved in this process is very important, and how to communicate, how they are responsible for the position that they have, is very important. R4*

II. For the second theme The ***Role of PR in making management decisions*** there were analyzed seven major sub-themes namely:

- *Cooperation communication - management;*
- *Decision consultation;*
- *Impact of changes in management;*
- *Managing the crisis situations;*
- *The external communication in crisis situations;*
- *Discussing organizational problems.*

1. For the first sub-theme entitled ***Communication - management cooperation***<sup>1</sup> the respondents described the cooperation between the communication department and the institutional management invoking the principle of permanent collaboration at the level of the company. In this regard, the respondents identified a number of specific issues that personalizes and characterizes the cooperation of the PR manager at the level of private institutions of Galati, namely: *Transforming reactive communication in a proactive one and transforming the internal communication with collaboration and efficiency.*

2. For the second theme it is observed that the ***consultation decision***<sup>2</sup> it can be observed that at the level of the Galati city, the companies integrate in the decision making perspective of the specialists in communication. According to the responses of the interviewees, their active presence at the table alongside with the managers, especially when put into question the aspects related to communication strategy, public image, promotional or marketing methods. In this regard, it is noted that

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<sup>1</sup> Describe the cooperation between the communications department (that you manage) and institutional management.

<sup>2</sup> What is the extent to which the management consults with a PR at the company level when you have to make a decision?

management is the one that allows decision-making through: consultation with the department of communication within the company.

3. The third theme entitled *managerial change impacts*<sup>1</sup> reveals that in situations where there are changes in the management of companies, specialists in public relations face with the changes in vision of the new managers.

4. *The management of crisis situations*<sup>2</sup>, captured in the fourth theme, is a challenge for any public relations specialist, and certain situations such as loss of reputation and image cumber the crisis management, especially when dealing with stakeholders (central and local authorities, customers and their employees) becomes a difficult task. In this regard, interviewers found that in these situations that they can use different techniques such as: *rebranding programs* and *analysis plans for crisis situations*.

5. *Management of external communication*<sup>3</sup> in crisis situations, caught in the fifth sub-theme, represents an important issue for respondents, especially when there is a discontinuity to dialogue in relation with stakeholders and amid a general feeling of mistrust. In such situations the communication process must achieve its objectives for the purpose of attracting understanding and support of the interested parties in managing crisis. Firstly the employees are the first to be informed quickly and accurately in order to mobilize and convey a sense of security. The ways in which interviewees managed the external communication in crisis situations are focused on the use of techniques of transmitting information such as: *use of internal resources* (monthly publication, online newsletters, meetings of internal communication), *meetings with stakeholders* and collaboration with *mass-media*.

[...] *And also stakeholders meetings (roundtable with authorities and local NGOs).*  
R1

[...] *Will focus on intelligence gathering, analysis and formulation of the agreed point of view of management.* R2

*Knowledge is power, a market positioning and an image as good, certainly will bring results.* R4

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<sup>1</sup> Whenever there are changes to the company's management, do they also influence the PR's activity? In what way?

<sup>2</sup> How to manage crisis situations?

<sup>3</sup> In such crisis situations how do you achieve the external communication?

6. The sixth theme entitled the *debate of the organizational issues*<sup>1</sup> was noted the fact that some companies' employees are very important in the sense of being assimilated or some image "ambassadors" is a cluster in which they are all bound to "each other". Also, some go to where they feel responsible for the values that they promote so as to be representative for the local community in which they work. Thus, from the answers given by respondents it shows that the internal staff is often involved in the debate of organizational issues focusing on: *the open relationship between employees and employers*.

[...] *We have a very close relationship, we are bound "to one another" every time we communicate the problems and we try to solve them. R3*

[...] *Sustainability stems from focusing on their employees who are viewed as passive and active image "ambassadors" of the company. This is only feasible amid strong internal transparent and oriented towards the truth communication. R1*

*The strategy is based on the values that we are trying to promote, the fact that we are a company of full services, located at 0 km of the city, we have a responsibility [...]* R4

7. For the last item of the structure of the second theme entitled *objectives of the organization seen through the eyes of PR*<sup>2</sup> communication specialists have passed through the filter of the profession of these objectives by providing answers focused on: *internal and external communication on promoting and enhancing public image*.

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<sup>1</sup> How involved is the internal staff in debating the organizational issues?

<sup>2</sup> What are the long term goals of the organization seen through the eyes of a PR?



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