



SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

BAC

END OF SEMESTER EXAMINATION
BAC 2203 INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC RELATIONS

Date: Wednesday, 18th March 2020

Time: 10:30-12:30

Instructions

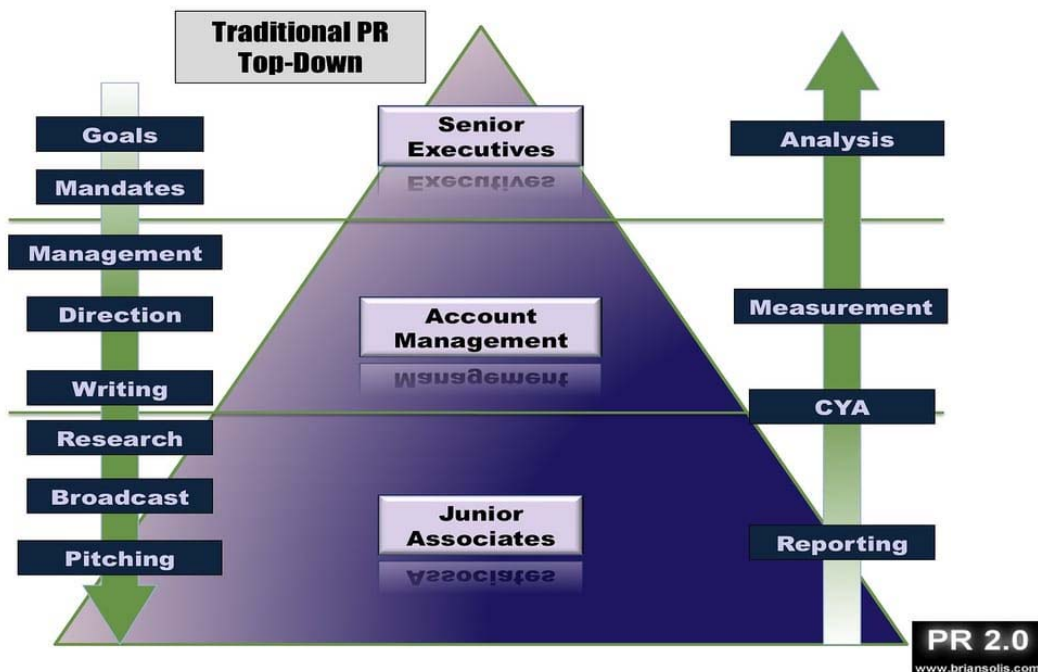
1. This examination consists of **FOUR** questions.
2. Answer **Question ONE (COMPULSORY)** and any other **TWO** questions.

QUESTION ONE

How traditional PR has changed—and where we are today
by [Jo-Ann Coetzee](#) | Feb 12, 2019 | [Analysis](#), [Public Relations](#)

Public relations has been no less affected by war, politics, technology and social change than any other industry. What makes it unique is that it's **the fine point where business, science, and raw human experience meet.** This is most often seen in the acknowledgment of PR's pull on customer engagement and public opinion, while also calling for more accurate scientific measurement of its effect on the bottom line.

By taking a look back at how PR has changed over the years, we're provided with some interesting markers of what the industry can expect of its future—and, no, it doesn't have as much to do with digital as you might think, even though digital PR does play a very important role in what the future has in store for business.



PR evolution #1: the birth of public relations

Ivy Lee, around 1915 ...and it's generally thought to be the start of a form of public relations that we'd recognize today.

At around the same time, Edward Bernays ...

In the 1940s, the success of Hitler's propaganda campaigns prompted President Franklin D. Roosevelt to create a group of "top men" to start working on an American version of propaganda—and the foundation of what would become modern public relations was laid.

PR evolution #2: email, PCs and smartphones

Before email, there was the fax machine. Although the technology dated back to the nineteenth century, the heyday of the fax machine was the 1980s when they were described as "today's fastest-growing area of office automation and business communication." If you couldn't say it over the telephone or in person, you faxed it. The screech of the fax machine and the familiar sight of workers scurrying between in-trays and the fax machine was an integral part of every PR office and agency.

Then came the World Wide Web in 1991, and a few years later came Microsoft Hotmail, and fax machines and pagers soon fell silent. PR practitioners began to send and receive information at unprecedented speed. Now you could send a press release to multiple recipients in seconds, and the journalist's mail cubby hole was a thing of the past.

Long gone are the days when PR professionals ran to the nearest telephone or fax machine. Today with the advent of the smartphone, you can manage an off-site event while sending and receiving emails, post to social media, proofread a press release, and talk to a client. Public relations is undoubtedly faster and more can be accomplished in a lot less time.

PR evolution #3: 24-hour news channels and the rise of social media

In the 1980s, PR practitioners would have to wait 24 hours for the next news bulletin. Then the 24-hour news channel arrived in the 1990s and it became incredibly hard to switch off. By 2010, therapists were treating the public and PR professionals for FOMO (fear of missing out) syndrome.

Always-on news channels spurred four interesting trends:

- **The photobomb:** A phrase coined by Greenpeace when they discovered in the 1970s the enormous power of one particularly evocative photograph

- **The sound bite:** A brief catchy comment or saying that almost never tells the whole truth but on which careers rise and fall
- **“Real” advertising:** Either using a real-life event that has captured the public’s imagination or images and content that appear to cut through traditional advertising “speak” which no longer appeals to generations who have grown up in an age of information saturation
- **The influencers:** Using celebrities and public figures to endorsement a brand, product or opinion—a PR practitioner’s dream of reaching a target market of many millions of customers in a way that seems more personal and real

PR evolution #4: search engines and citizen journalists

It’s amazing to think that Excite—the world’s very first search engine—was born in 1993. Since the launch of Google in 1998, much has changed in PR. Interns no longer trudge off to the library for research, and those hours spent trawling through microfiche are long forgotten in an age of PR without borders.

More than simply making dissemination of information easy beyond our wildest dreams, search engines have given rise to SEO, content marketing and hashtags. **The most profound effect on the PR industry has come via citizen journalists and all-powerful consumers.** Now, while the PR pro sleeps, a client you’ve worked so hard to bring into the 21st century can go viral and hit PR paydirt or fall victim to #badservice.

If you still long for the days of the telephonic complaints department, you’re not alone. PR pros no longer control crises, but they must control the chaos.

PR evolution #5: the increasingly complex and changing role of the PR manager

Before the new millennium, the PR manager was often, incorrectly, thought of as little more than a corporate party planner. But the last few years have seen a growing trend of appointing PR managers in the role of CMO for some pretty big concerns—including Coca Cola, LinkedIn, BP and Bismarck. There are two main reasons for this: integrated communication and media monitoring and PR analytics.

Since we no longer watch the news on TV at eight then switch it off to knit or stare at the stars from the patio, it’s hard to say where marketing and communications begin and PR ends. It’s all about integration today, and a customer is just as likely to see an advert while accessing the weather just before looking up reviews for the new coffee shop that’s opened around the corner. The second reason for PR’s increased street cred is the art and science of media monitoring, measurement, and metrics. Getting an idea of how many people have seen your ad in the local paper the old-fashioned, is a world apart from the sophisticated tools we use today.

PR has changed dramatically through the ages and will continue to do so. PR practitioners have coped well with this change, especially considering the speed at which it’s affected the industry in the last thirty years.

History suggests that even as we race to be first to the next bit of tech or digital innovation (or at least avoid riding someone else’s coattails), what remains more important than the devices and the channels are the people who work in the PR industry and drive its response to change. It is their choices and outputs that make the technological advances work at a human level.

Even if the train seems to go a bit too fast at times and PR practitioners finds themselves balanced for a moment on one foot, they are what will continue to shape the future of the industry—even when those robots come along.

QUESTIONS

- What do the underlined statements mean? (6 marks)
- Two ‘Fathers’ of PR, Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays, are mentioned in this article, though the details of the discussions have been left out. Discuss their contribution to the field of PR. (10 marks)

- iii) In tabulated form, draw five distinct comparisons between PR as it was then, and what it is now, as illustrated in the article, and based on what you now know on PR. (5 marks)
- iv) The author raises several arguments for the authenticity, value and longevity of the field of PR. Isolate three and discuss their validity. (9 marks)

QUESTION 2

- i) Why is it necessary to learn theory? (1 mark)
- ii) Discuss two PR theories and detail their value and application in the field of PR. (14 marks)

QUESTION 3 (15 marks)

Umami's uncle has just begun a Public Relations Agency. He has hired you as his first employee and requires that you build a solid staff team of 5 members. Design the content of an advert that you will run in the local dailies and on the Agency's website and social media pages. The advert must contain a description of the firm and then proceed to highlight the general requirements of one of the positions, and then the specific desirable qualities of the preferred candidate.

QUESTION 4 (15 marks)

Grunig and Hunt analysed four traditions or ways of practicing PR. Write notes on each one of them and be careful to highlight an advantage and disadvantage of each.