What is Public Relations

Public Relations is a management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics on whom its success or failure depends.
The key to this definition and the foundation for this course is the phrase, Management Function. It is here that we will begin to distinguish the profession of public relations and the role of the public relations professional from the misconceptions that exist.
Misconception #1

Public Relations is about liking people. “I entered the field because I like people.”
Dispelling misconception #1

Liking people is important--but remember, cannibals “like” people too. It may not be enough.
Misconception #2

Public relations professionals spend their days shaking hands with people and making people feel good.
Dispelling Misconception #2

Public relations professionals are organizational communication specialist who spend their days engaged in a variety of business activities.
Does Glad Handing Have a Place?

Certainly. It is important to win people’s favor by being considerate and gregarious. But, the profession requires much more.
Misconception #3

Public Relations professionals are liars and cheats.
Dispelling Misconception #3

Unfortunately, some are. However, these people cannot be considered true public relations professionals if they lie and cheat.
What then is the ideal public relations professional?

Let’s analyze the nature of the profession and the knowledge base of the professionals by first picturing an “artichoke”
We’ll begin by peeling away the layers to analyze the various components.
What do the layers contain?
Let’s consider:

- Personality of the individual
- Specific Skill Base
- Dual hat theory--[management / technician]
- Liberal arts education [renaissance person]
- IMC approach
- Status of the profession
What Personality Traits?

- First, we should like people—we are in the people business
- Second, we must also be able to distinguish between various audiences
- Third, we need high energy—we often juggle a variety of tasks all with important deadlines like---YESTERDAY
- Fourth, must have diverse skills
Four Essential Skills

1. Research
2. Writing
3. Planning Expertise
4. Critical Thinking
We can therefore see public relations defined by 10 basic principles

1. Public relations deals with reality not false fronts. (translation--it deals with facts, not fiction)
2. Public relations is a service oriented profession in which public interest, not personal reward, should be the primary consideration.
3. Public relations practitioners must have the guts to say no to a client or to refuse a deceptive program.

4. Public relations professionals must always preserve the integrity of the channels of communication.

5. Public relations professionals have one foot inside and one foot outside of the organization.
6. Public relations must use scientific research--it is not a guessing game.

7. Public relations professionals must be grounded in the social sciences--psychology, sociology, semantics, etc.--to properly communicate with publics (intuition is not enough)
8. Public relations requires a multidisciplinary approach -- economics, law, political science, business, etc.

9. Public relations professionals must alert publics to problems before they become crises.

10. Public relations needs to be measured by ethical standards.
Dual Hat Theory

- To be effective, public relations must be part of the management decision making coalition.

- After participating in decision making, the practitioner must have the technical skills to properly communicate to a variety of audiences.
We need to know a little bit about a lot of things. Why? Because we are boundary spanners who interact with each subsystem both internally and externally.
Public relations, advertising and marketing have overlapping functions. We must be grounded in all areas to be an effective ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST.
What is the status of the profession?

It depends on who you ask and what education, principles and professional organizations that the practitioner participates in.
Before we can move forward we should first learn where we came from.

The history and evolution of the profession. Every society, and every craft owes a distinct debt to the past.
Public relations is as old as communication.

- Public relations dates back to the beginning of human communication. If a society is to exist, some level of persuasion must be present through interpersonal and group communication.
Consider that:

- St. John the Baptist himself did a superb job of doing advance work for Jesus of Nazareth.
- The leaders of Babylonian, Greece and Rome were quite adept at public relations. They all had the equivalent of the modern day publicist to prepare publics for arriving dignitaries.
Consider that...

- Speech writing, community relations, government relations, analysis and even employee and investor relations have had the same meaning since the days of Plato--the master speech writer.

- Aristotle’s book Rhetoric could be the first book on public relations. In it he described the “art of oratory, especially the persuasive use of language to influence the thought and actions of listeners.”
Consider that...

- Even as far back as 1800 B.C., archeologists have discovered that farmers in what is now known as Iraq received propaganda literature on how to effectively sow their seeds and irrigate the land to best meet the needs of the settlement.
Consider that...

- Greek political leaders relied on loyal subjects to promote their Olympic Games.

- Or that Pope Urban II in the Eleventh Century persuaded thousands of followers to serve God and gain forgiveness for their sins by engaging in the Holy Crusades against the Muslims.
Finally, consider that...

- Six centuries after the Holy Crusades, Pope Gregory XV created the College of Propaganda to supervise foreign missions and train priests to propagate the faith (advance the faith)
Therefore, the idea of using all forms of human communication--drama and storytelling among them--to influence behavior of others is nothing new.
Public relations as we know it today is considered an American phenomena yet it is growing in importance as a tool for globalization and international relations.
British Scholar J.A. Pimlott said in the late 1940s:

“Public relations is essential to American Democracy. It is one of the methods by which society adjusts to changing circumstances and resolves clashes between conflicting attitudes, ideas, institutions and personalities.” He added that public relations helps bridge the gap between the publics and the ruling class (government and industry).
Before we look deeper at the history of public relations we must first look at the words of Edward Bernays.

In 1922, Bernays’ book Crystallizing Public Opinion described the “new profession of the public relations counsel.” The objective of the public relations counselor is to interpret the organization to the public and the public to the organization.
Now, let’s look at eras in history to describe public relations activities.

- Seventeenth Century--Publicist promoted the migration from Europe to the settlements in the Colonies from Massachusetts to Georgia. Excessively glowing accounts of new land often lead to disillusionment, despair and failed settlements.
1763 - 1776 -- Skillful propagandists led by Samuel Adams promoted the American Revolution and gave birth to democracy. The founding fathers needed public support to make the revolution a reality.
Adams used six techniques

1. An activist organization (The Son’s of Liberty)
2. The use of many media (Posters, Town Meetings, Newspapers)
3. Symbols and Slogans (the Liberty Tree, no Taxation without representation)
Adams.…

4. The Pseudo Event (The Boston Tea Party)
5. Orchestrating Conflict, getting your message to the public first (the Boston Massacre)
6. Need for a sustained saturation campaign
Adams’ counterparts, John Jay, Alexander Hamilton and James Madison used the power of propaganda with the drafting of the Federalist Papers to help ratify the U.S. Constitution.
Vast change in the development of the nation.
Migration west created legends out of Daniel Boone and glamorized it
Andrew Jackson and the Kitchen Cabinet led by Amos Kendall
The emergence of P.T. Barnum
19th century continued...

- 1850s--Publicists Charles Russell Lowell and the promotion of the railroad taking people out West.
- 1861 - 1865 --Abraham Lincoln’s mastery of propaganda in fighting the civil war.
1875 - 1900--The Industrial Revolution led by the Robber Barons such as William Vanderbilt who is credited with the phrase “The public be damned.”

1883--The establishment of the first public relations department at AT&T where Theodore Vail first used the term “relations with the publics.”
Twentieth Century

- Era of Muckraking Journalists such as Upton Sinclair’s novel The Jungle about the meat packing industry and Ida Tarbell’s History of the Standard Oil Company.
- Creation of the Committee on Public Information during World War I headed by George Creel
Twentieth Century (continued)

- The office of War information led by Elmer Davis
- The social unrest of the 1960s
- The merging of public relations and advertising in the 1970s
- The new technologies of the 1980s and 1990
- The new Millennium?
A look at the Four Models of Public Relations

- Press Agentry and Publicity--one-way communication led by P.T. Barnum
- Public Information--one-way communication led by Ivy Lee
- Two-way Asymmetric Communication led by Edward Bernays
- Two-way Symmetric Communication led by Bernays along with educators
The history of public relations is filled with important names and significant players.
Public relations pioneers

- Leone Baxter -- formed first agency specializing in political campaigns for Dwight D. Eisenhower
- Edward Bernays -- Father of Modern Public Relations
- Harry Bruno -- Charles Lindbergh’s press relations for his flight across the Atlantic
Pioneers continued

- Harwood Childs -- Princeton University professor who expanded on Bernays’ work and theory and stressed that students must be more than publicists--must be students of social effects of personal and corporate conduct.

- Carl Byoir -- formed one of the oldest and most successful firms.
Jay Cooke -- conceived and directed the first American fund-raising drives selling war bonds for the Union army during the civil war.

George Creel--chair of the Committee on Public Information helped mobilize American’s acceptance of the war in Europe.
Elmer Davis--Creel’s counterpart in WWII headed the Office of War Information created by President Roosevelt.

Paul Garrett--first public relations manager for General Motors stressed that “public relations can only serve its purpose if it convinces the public as a whole that it is serving the public’s good at all times.”
Pioneers continued

- Richard “Toby” Hamilton--P.T. Barnum’s press secretary
- Rex Harlow--founded the Council of Public Relations Counsel--now know as PRSA
- Amos Kendall--first presidential press secretary
Pioneers continued

- Ivy Lee--the driving force behind the field
- George Michaelis--Organization the nation’s first publicity firm in Boston, 1900.
- Arthur W. Page--VP of AT&T in the 1927. Helped set the standard for corporate public relations by having a voice in decision making.
Theodore Vail--organized the first public relations program for AT&T with the then revolutionary thesis of a public utility serving in the public’s interest.

Hamilton Wright--pioneered in the promotion of land development and in representing foreign nations in the United States in the 1920s.