

Scope and Importance of Public Relations to Physical Education and Sports

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Abstract- Public Relations is a terminology that is frequently used to refer to the relationship between two or more individuals or groups who have common interests. It involves the efforts that are made by an individual, institutions or groups of people to win the support of those who are members of the community with whom they interact, encounter or associate, and whose co-operation is required. In the sports circles public relations has to reside in designing and managing a long-term relationship with the athletes, spectators, sponsors and community. The relationship with any of these four shareholders can be addressed through public relations, a marketing communication technique that brings value both for the company sending the message, and for other categories interested in its well-being. The absence of good public relations among personnel involved in the various aspects of sports is bound to lead to unnecessary friction, frustration, disorder, division, unproductively and general lack of support or goodwill. The purpose of this paper is to introduce the reader to the relationships between PR and Physical Education and sports management. It explores how sports public relations practitioners have developed a range of successful strategies and tactics for influencing media coverage, and supporting the sport's domains. The authors conclude that the effective use of Public Relations in sport can generate conversion, facilitate sport representatives positioning, and maintain continued sport sustenance.

I. INTRODUCTION

Public relation is the function of top management and the head of organization must be the "point person" to set direction, goal and policy to establish an effective program. A good public relation program

depends on systemic and purposeful evaluation of public attitudes from in-depth data developed from skillful experts using appropriate instruments and methods. A public program in physical and sports education should be considered with the public interest in mind. If the organization is large enough, the execution of activities will be by quality practitioners. "Emphasis is directed to the methods form gaining understanding, acceptance and supports; these must be 'earned' in order to be of lasting value" (Bronzan & Stotlar, 1987).

Neither athletics nor physical education are commercial enterprises, so the bottom line is not to sell a product, but rather to build an efficient program based on policies, regulations and laws. The public must be kept informed of how the programs are meeting these objectives. Every teacher or coach needs to aware that his or her program is really owned by the public.

II. PUBLIC RELATIONS: SCOPE AND IMPORTANCE

Much expertise in public relation is derived from industry. Some of these methods are excellent and easily adoptable to school programs. A major problem that is common in industry public relation, as well as physical education and sports PR, is the tendency to overstate the benefits of products. Whereas industry must strike a balance between the profit motive and social responsibility, administrators in physical education and must ensure that only scientific and professionally sound claims are made on behalf of programs. For example, if football programs promoted as building character, citizenship and sportsmanship, the administrator must see it that program does that!

Public Relation is needed for a variety of reasons. Physical education and sports are constantly evolving and the public need to be informed about the changes and new programs. PR programs help to raise the financial support required, an important factor because funding for physical education and sports is being restricted. In a democracy, the public has right to know their contributions are being spent, and through good PR they can find out. Lastly, the two-way communication PR provides enhances the staff's morale because their performances are reorganized. At the same time, they are motivated towards greater achievements because they know that the results will be noticed.

III. PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC RELATION IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS

- The Foundation of successful PR program is an excellent physical education and / or athletic program.
- PR must be based on the truth and the promise that the public has a right to be informed about the programs.
- PR must be continuous.
- A major responsibility is to represent the physical educator and / or athletic programs to the public.
- The PR program must be based on two – way communication.
- The PR program must explore the use of all forms of media and communication avenues.
- Positive human relations must be developed for a PR program that's successful over the long term.
- Define the particular public groups whose opinions affect the program and structure the PR program to reach them.

IV. DEVELOPMENT OF A PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS

The development of good public relations programme is a process that identifies several crucial steps and elements. Bucher (1979) emphasis that a public relations programme is something that must be planned with considerable care, and great amounts of time and effort are necessary to achieve the desired

results. The programme must involve all those that are associated with the organization or enterprise not just the top brass (Bucher, 1979; Dougherty & Bonano, 1979). The steps or factors that are vital to the establishment of a sound public relations programme include the following:

- One of the crucial steps towards developing a public relations strategy is to identify all the publics with whom an enterprise relates or encounters in the course of carrying out sports and physical education programmes (Bucher, 1979; Fordham & Leaf, 1978; Frost, Lockhart & Marchall, 1995). A public is each individual, organization or group of people that has special interest in whatever you do, and with whom you want to establish communication. For those involved in the administration and management of sports, such related publics may include members of sports associations and organizations, sportsmen and sportswomen, sports councils, schools and colleges, coaches and referees associations, sports clubs, News media (the press), politicians, heads and officials of government departments, sports fans and so forth. Once the identification of these publics has been done, it may be necessary to arrange them in priority order.
- The other important step in developing a public relations plan is the determination of the reasons, purposes and aims for which you and your office or enterprise seeks to relate with other people and organizations. For instance, what do you intend to gain from shaping good relations with sportsmen and women, sports clubs and associations, and so forth.
- The sports personnel interested in projecting a good image of themselves, their functions and organizations must also recognize that the foundation for any such good public relations is acceptable and outstanding performance of the person himself and that of his office. This means that good public relations must be earned and deserved, and this can only arise from exemplary performance.
- It is important to set up effective and meaningful communication channels between the sports public relations personnel and their related

publics. Communication should be on a two-way channel basis. Effective communication from those involved in the administration and management of sports will enable their publics obtain information pertaining to the way they conduct their sports programmes and affairs. The publics have a right to the information, and withholding of any vital information may lead to unnecessary doubt and suspicion, which may in turn lead to sour relations and lack of goodwill.

V. TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION CHANNELS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations endeavors are sustained by effective two-way communication channels between the concerned parties. The channels of communication at personal and group levels are varied and include the following:

- Listening to others (Frost, Lockhart & Marchall, 1995). Listening is as much a part of good public relations as talking is. Listening represents a show of respect for another person's point of view and selfhood. People who listen and think are given full attention when it is their turn to speak.
- Written correspondences with one's related publics is another important channel of communication that cannot be overlooked (Fordham & Leaf, 1978; Singer, 1976). One has to learn how to write letters that say exactly what one wants said. Start with roughing out letters, then re-write until you get them right. "Thank you" letters or notes also help in opening many lines of communication with those whom one intends to relate with.
- Sharing is another tool by which one can develop two-way communication with those he/she seeks to establish relations with (Frost, Lockhart & Marshall, 1995; Dougherty & Bonana, 1979). Public relations efforts may at times involve giving assistance or support whenever and wherever it may be needed. This means that public relations utilize the "give-and-take" technique involving, for example, those in sports management and those in the wider community. The sports manager is compelled to give such

things as information on his/her sports department and programmes in return for any other support received from the public.

VI. REBRAND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Ever since NASPE established the national standards, physical education resembles more of an age-appropriate course in kinesiology or exercise physiology. Sometime in the 1980s, many departments changed their name from "Physical Education" to "Kinesiology." The word "kinesiology" carries with it a certain level of respect, as an "-ology" suffix denotes a connection to science. Although it is just semantics, having a degree titled "Kinesiology" versus "Physical Education" sounds more elevated, with far more advanced education attached. In keeping with the greater depth at which we are teaching our physical education students, I believe we should give the class its true name: "kinesiology." This name can be used for middle and high school purposes (secondary education). I propose keeping the name "physical education" for elementary school, as that is more accurate for younger children. There is no reason for physical education not to follow the examples set by the other core classes: using the simplest title in elementary school, then a more accurate title in secondary school. For example, in elementary school, students learn "arithmetic," in middle school they learn "math," and in high school they learn the individual branches of study (algebra, geometry, trigonometry, calculus). I would like to see physical education recognized for the body of study that it is: a study of how the body moves in relation to different game situations, and how it develops the skills necessary to improve performance. Perhaps seeing the word "kinesiology" on their child's report card might also get parents to take it more seriously.

VII. PUBLIC RELATIONS APPROACHES AND PRACTICES

The establishment of good public relations involves the recognition and adoption of several approaches and practices that are considered crucial to creating a desirable image for the concerned individuals, organization or enterprise. Some of the most

important approaches and practices include the following:-

- Those sports personnel interested in having good relations with their related publics must recognize that they should have uninterrupted, effective and meaningful communication with their publics. The inevitable disagreement and conflict among people and groups who work together should not be allowed to cause a rupture in relationships (Frost, Lockhart & Marshall, 1995). Personal biases should not be permitted to adversely affect good public relations. It may not be possible entirely to avoid disagreement, conflict and personal biases but communication must be maintained.
- To be successful in personal public relations and to make a positive contribution to the public relations effort of one's sports organization, one must have a genuine liking for other people
- (Frost, Lockhart & Marshall, 1995). Courtesy, concern for other people and listening to their problems helps in enhancing one's public relations image.
- It is Important to recognize possible friction points with your publics and learn how to defuse them. It is generally considered better to recognize them openly and work doubly hard to find amicable solutions to them and thus, facilitate and maintain two-way communication with the publics at their points rather than pretend they do not exist.
- Public relations requires exceptional patience (Frost, Lockhart & Marshall, 1995). Despite good plans and good intentions, things may go wrong, and some people or publics may refuse to communicate but patience can bring things back on track.
- Losing one's cool or expressing unnecessary negative emotions such as anger, scolding or pride is not good public relations, as this may lead to antagonism and may be cause of one losing friends and co-workers. Any information suggesting a negative or angry tone may cause problems for the sports administrator or manager (Broyles & Hay, 1979).
- Objectivity in decision-making is one of the marks of highly professional (sports) administrators and managers. One has to make decisions in the absence of emotions, prejudices, and such decisions

should be seen to be fair in the prevailing circumstances.

- Always convey messages that are truthful and convincing. To be convincing, a message has to be built on truth, not falsehoods (Broyles & Hay, 1979). Information must be factual, honest and correct.
- h) One's reputation is another important asset in public relation. It is indeed helpful and pleasant to be labelled capable, honest, truthful, sincere, hardworking, intelligent, open and human (Bucher, 1979; Frost, Lockhart & Marshall, 1995). It is through this kind of good reputation that one is able to win the support of his/her publics and develop a cordial and effective working relationship with them.
- Whether they like it or not, sports and administrators and managers are in the political arena. This arises from the great interest politicians have in sporting activities. As such, sports administrators and managers must devise ways of working with politicians in the development of sports without getting unnecessarily influenced by the politicians into helping them meet their selfish ends.

CONCLUSION

Good and effective public relations is emphasized in sports and many other sectors of work in society based on the fact that no person or group of persons can live in isolation. The element of interdependence is inevitable. To achieve success in their work, sports administrators and managers need the support of other people, most of whom they encounter in the course of carrying out their duties. They are therefore compelled to establish good and meaningful relations with people who have interest in sports, and whom they encounter in their fields of work, and whose support is necessary in their endeavors of developing sports.

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