

Секция «Стратегическая коммуникация (подсекция на английском языке)»

Strategic Communication

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Before we proceed with the in depth discourse of Public relations ethics, we need to first define the meaning of public relations. According to Gunig and Hunt (1984), they wrote that ‘public relation is the management of communication between an organisation and its publics’. Harlow (1988) defined public relations in a more elementary level. He mentioned that Public relation is ‘a management function which deals with the relations between two or more organisations or public.’ There are many other scholars and practitioners that have produced their own definition of public relations but it is basically a communication process which uses different strategies to ultimately build beneficial relationships with publics or organisations. These obligations of serving the publics’ interest have caused heated debates amongst many practitioners and scholars over its fundamental values of public relations. It has also become a highly controversial industry as many people have negative stigmas towards public relations. It is understandable for practitioners and scholars agreeing that the study of public relations ethics is crucial for students to have as a public relations curriculum but students themselves needs to know the importance too. As The Professional Bond state, “While public relations professional education perhaps cannot make students ethical, either professionally or personally, such education can define and teach professional ethics as It can provide a body of knowledge about the process of ethical decision-making that can help students not only to recognize ethical dilemmas, but to use appropriate critical thinking skills to help resolve these dilemmas in a way that results in an ethical outcome.” Kate Fitch, a Senior lecturer at Murdoch University, did a study on how students perceives ethics in public relations education and practice. Participants of a focus group study done by her acknowledged that public relations ethics was a grey area; “The line is very blurry but the uni is doing a good job to try and show us that PR isn’t all about that” (Fitch, 2013). The study also found out that students see ethics in public relations as being responsible to themselves, client or employer. In this study, students were critical of the Code of Ethics provided by bodies such as the PRIA as it only emphasise on issues such as reputation and risk manager rather than practices that are socially responsible. To conclude, the industry of public relations has indeed very difficult topic. We found out that PR is often perceived by the public as unethical, as practitioners often use the term ‘spin’ whereby he or she may not give a truthful interpretation of events which would ultimately lead to the lack of trust in the PR practitioner. With practitioners’ lack of trust it leads to the lack of trust of the organization and leads directly to the loss of reputation. That is why public relations ethics is paramount. Although professional skills are important in this industry, it needs to be ethical. What it basically means is that PR professionals need to do the right thing. Referring to international PR bodies for their codes of conduct is the first step when in doubt. We will also need to provide more emphasis for education and approved courses as to ensure that students will be trained on ethics and ethical decision making in practice of public relations in the real world.

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