

# The 20 Ps of Marketing

PUBLICITY

THE NETWORK  
OF LEADERS

CRITICALEYE

By David Pearson

This is the eighth in our series from Criticaleye Associate **David Pearson** whose upcoming book **The 20 Ps of Marketing** expands on the traditional marketing mix. In this overview of the eighth chapter, David argues why having a strong PR department will ensure your company shines in a positive light among its publics.

**Publicity** is not the same as advertising (although in Spanish it is!). The management of public relations is both an active and a passive function. An enterprise will set out a proactive strategy to develop its public relations but will need the capacity to respond to events, both negative and positive. At its most skilled public relations can turn an event which might have generated negative publicity into one that has a positive impact on the reputation of the enterprise.

Public relations (PR) is the practice of managing the communication between an organisation and its various publics. Public relations gain an organisation or individual exposure to their audiences using topics of public interest and news items that do not direct payment. Common activities include speaking at conferences, working with the press, and employee communication. It is something that is not tangible and this is what sets it apart from advertising.

PR can be used to build rapport with employees, customers, investors, neighbouring communities, or the general public. Almost any organisation that has a stake in how it is portrayed in the public arena employs some level of public relations. There are a number of related disciplines that fall under the banner of corporate communications, such as media relations, investor relations, and internal communications including employee relations. Corporate communications may and usually will report separately in the organisation from

other marketing functions, but that makes it no less a part of marketing as it clearly covers the reputation of the company and its brands. Indeed one of the most important aspects of PR is that of product public relations which deals with gaining publicity for a particular product or service through PR tactics rather than using advertising.

In Chapter 4 on Promotion we quoted Ralph Waldo Emerson who is reputed to have said, "Build a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door." The original quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson writing in his journal in 1855 was "I trust a good deal to common fame, as we all must. If a man has good corn, or wood, or boards, or pigs to sell, or can make better chairs or knives, crucibles or church organs than anybody else, you will find a broad hard-beaten road to his house, though it be in the woods."

The popular version was born when in 1889 Sarah S. B. Yule and Mary S. Keene, preparing a lecture, tried to recall Emerson's exact words. They could not. But they came close, deciding he had said: "If a man can write a better book, preach a better sermon, or make a better mousetrap than his neighbour, though he builds his house in the woods the world will make a beaten path to his door."

As I said before this is not true. We need to promote our better mousetrap to make the world aware of it and give reasons why it is better. But we also need a PR campaign to help the world understand why it is better. In

fact, many companies will not have the funds to advertise their new product but will be able to mount a cost-effective publicity campaign.

At Mars we used a different name for PR, that of ER or External Relations. In this respect we were defining it as any aspect of the company's external relations with all of its publics. That was 30 years ago and the idea is now common although the name PR has survived. Practitioners are likely to use the plural publics as much as the singular public.

The most common tool in the PR man's tool box is the press release. This document is issued to the press to announce something that the organisation wishes to publicise that is put into the public domain. It is not a trivial task to produce such a document and the skill of writing one is well worth developing. It needs to cover all the important information but should be written in such a way that the reader, usually harassed and likely to cut corners, will be attracted to the story by its headline and its opening words and will get to the end wanting to know more. It is customarily signed off by a senior officer of the company and its facts must be very carefully checked because once released, there is very little chance of correcting what is now out of the bottle.

To read the rest of this chapter go to [www.davidcpearson.co.uk](http://www.davidcpearson.co.uk)

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*"Some are born great, some achieve greatness and some hire public relations officers"*  
- Professor Daniel J. Boorstin,  
American social historian and educator



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David enjoys a varied portfolio career working across the public, private and voluntary sectors. He has extensive experience with several of the great brand owners worldwide. David is a Criticaleye Associate. Please visit [www.davidcpearson.co.uk](http://www.davidcpearson.co.uk) for more information.