

# Communications: An Overview

## Understanding the Basics of Public Relations

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Public relations are all around us (*promoting and publicising things, lifestyle ideas*), but surprisingly little is known about the business of public relations itself. What are Public Relations?

It is often a misunderstood activity as, when it is compared to law, medicine and theology, it is a very young “profession” with recently established codes of conduct. At the same time, public relations call for a number of qualities from those who operate in this specific marketing communications area such as creativity, organisational skills, and good management.

Also, public relations have a question of definition. Mention most professions, and everyone knows what one is talking about. In the case of public relations, it means different things to different people.

Therefore one needs a definition. Of the hundreds of definitions that exist, perhaps the one employed by the UK’s Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) is the one that incorporates most of the necessary elements required for a sound basic understanding of this practice whether from the academic or operational point of view:

*Public Relations is:*

*the planned and sustained effort*

*to establish and maintain*

*goodwill and understanding*

*between an organisation and its public.*

Also, analysing the term itself “Public < + > Relations”, public relations address a number of audiences, more often called “publics”.

Returning to specific objectives that need to be achieved by an organisation in order to be profitable and have a sound future, very few organisations know:

1. who their key publics are...and why
2. what those audiences really think about them

3. how they could use a wide range of public relations techniques to create better understanding, including a better reputation, and
4. what the benefits would be if one embarks on a planned and sustained effort

*to establish and maintain goodwill and understanding between the organisation and its*

*publics.*

Public relations help to improve sales, avoid misunderstandings and improve the environment in which an organisation operates. Furthermore, public relations can help make publics look at an organisation differently either by changing perception/s about it or by setting the correct perception/s; buy the organisation's products; use the organisation's services and, equally important, create a better environment in which to do business.