Differences Between Public Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility: An Analysis

ABSTRACT: This article compares corporate social responsibility and corporate public relations by reviewing their origins, theories, processes, and primary responsibilities and found them to be quite similar in these respects. By comparing the two disciplines, theorists and practitioners can gain greater insight into each field.

The comparison reveals a key difference whereby effective communication methods are largely absent from the social responsibility literature; yet by including such techniques, one can enhance the development and overall impact of managing corporate–stakeholder relationships. A communication management approach, which is linked to stakeholder analysis, is offered.

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Analyzing the similarities of public relations and corporate social responsibility (CSR) creates an exciting opportunity to study the underpinnings of each discipline to reveal concrete ideas about how to optimize their effectiveness and their impact on the corporate world. It is unclear why this type of direct comparison has not been made before, but it is obvious that each discipline has taken cues from the other. Like the Republican and Democratic political
parties, these two areas are sounding more and more similar. Just as it is necessary to study each political party to understand their similarities, it is also important to look at the beginning of CSR and public relations.

The rise of CSR, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, coincided with the increased concern for a corporation’s image. No longer were the boardrooms closed and executives quiet; instead, companies had to adapt to an ever-increasing demand for information from the public. Soon after, with the publication of Edward Freeman’s seminal work, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, the general public became to be viewed as a more specialized grouping of primary and secondary stakeholders.

But, during much of the 1980s and early 1990s, social responsibility and social performance lacked either a definitive model or a set of agreed-upon concepts. Still, many scholars outlined several central topics aimed at describing CSR.

Although the history of public relations dates back to the turn of the 20th century, its importance, or to some, its unwanted dependence, surged in the late 1970s as well. The important shifts in business and society during this time also affected public relations by forcing it into the center of the communication field. It, too, has gone through various iterations, from public information to reputation management to relationship management, yet its process and function remains strikingly similar to the central topics of CSR.

**EVOLUTION: PUBLIC RELATIONS AND CSR**

Although organizations have been “relating” to the “public” for centuries, the 1920s began what became the most dramatic set of changes in the public relations field, which continued in earnest through the 1950s. Before this period, public relations focused on the dissemination of information or one-way communication models in which the quality of information was important but audience feedback had yet to be fully considered. Public relations grew in scope and stature in the 1920s with social scientists beginning to take note of the profession. Theorists, such as Walter Lippmann, focused on the importance of the media in forming public opinion. Practitioners also began to focus on the idea of social responsibility, noting that it was good for public relations and hence good for business.

Arthur W. Page, one of the first in-house public relations experts, joined AT&T in 1927 as a vice president. During his tenure, he coined many important concepts that remain true today to both public relations and CSR practitioners. One in particular deserves mention not only for its insight, but also for its usefulness in the 20th and 21st centuries:

> All business in a democratic country begins with the public’s permission and exists by public approval.
Page also believed that businesses should have public relations departments that have real influence with top management. (p. 44)7

In the 1930s, after the Great Depression, the primary challenge was to persuade a confused public that things were about to change for the better. The focus of public relations at the time can be summed up by the campaign slogan of The National Association of Manufacturers and the US Chamber of Commerce, “What helps business helps you.”8 In other words, the needs of business and society were synonymous. In an effort to bring prosperity to a traumatized, post-Depression nation, public relations efforts seemed to dip back into one-way communication.

However, the 1940s, according to one communications scholar, saw public relations become a “full-fledged profession” as it became more sophisticated and coordinated.9 Practitioners began to use opinion research techniques such as the newly established Gallup Poll. It was also during this time that the first school of public relations was established at Boston University.

In the 1950s, it was television that had a profound effect on public relations because of its powerful ability to shape the publics’ opinions, something eagerly sought. Some corporations found TV to be helpful in shaping their reputations, whereas others did not.10 Public relations study began to blossom with over 100 college or universities offering courses in public relations. Theory tended to focus on two-way communication models and was practiced by the likes of Edward Bernays, who focused on scientific research, audience feedback, and the evaluation of attitudes. It was during this time that public relations was marked by the concept of engineering consent.11 Corporations were counseled to gain the public’s consent for their operations and over-all philosophy, thereby solving public policy problems.12

During the 1960s, the antibusiness sentiment in the United States was palpable. The much-publicized era of activism began to change the way in which corporations interacted with society, and thus how they communicated with society. The aforementioned public consent was thought by some to be dissolving because of the insurgence of activism and public skepticism. Nuclear power, civil rights abuses, regulation of business’ activities, the consumer rights movement, and the women’s movement were just a few key developments that contributed to the tension between business and society. New demands were placed on public relations professionals, such as management skills and an understanding of human psychology. By the late 1960s, the discipline had its own professional organization, the Public Relations Society of America.

In 1973, the Texas Gulf Sulfur case made its imprint on public relations by fundamentally changing the practice. The judge declared that a company must immediately disclose any information that may affect the value of a stock, in this case the discovery by engineers of a rich mineral body. Public relations practitioners then needed to focus on their role as insiders by making sure they did not arbitrarily select what information to reveal and what to conceal. The field of investor relations gained considerable momentum as well after the Supreme Court’s decision.
Similarly, those advocating social responsibility of business struggled to
define their discipline beginning primarily in the 1920s. The idea of CSR appeared
around the turn of the 20th century. At that time, businesses tended to respond
to societal needs through charity. Certain wealthy individuals, such as Andrew
Carnegie and Henry Ford, gave money to support the poor in a time when
Medicare and Social Security did not exist.

Soon, however, society’s needs became too great, with steady population
increases and the aftermath of World War I. As a result, much of the charitable
contributions were taken on by businesses themselves and not just by their wealthy
owners. According to Post et al. many of today’s businesses think of CSR as making
these types of paternalistic, charitable contributions. However, he continues,
there is another form of CSR, that is, the stewardship principle. According to this
view, corporations become stewards or public trustees by using their resources to
affect all people in society in fundamental ways, not just stockholders. This latter
principle led to modern stakeholder theory in which corporate managers recognize
the need to interact meaningfully with all groups who have a stake in the organi-
zation’s activities. Although stewardship ideas were discussed in the works of
Abrams, Bowen, and Eells, it was during the 1960s and 1970s, that CSR under-
went some of its most important iterations.

As Wood outlined in her comprehensive work on theory and research in
corporate social performance, “it became apparent during this time, particularly
through social activism and regulatory activity, that social expectations of business
had outstripped managers’ comprehension and capabilities.” Thus, scholars and
managers alike began to explore, in earnest, the ideas of CSR. In the 1970s, a
plethora of studies on various business-related social problems were conducted
(see below). Such research was based on the idea that a business is an “actor in the
environment and should respond to social pressures and demands.” By the early
1980s, there was a slight shift in the focus of the research from the idea that
companies should be responsible to how companies tended to respond to business-
related social issues (responsiveness) as well as what was considered ethical behav-
ior.

Models of CSR began to emerge, with most claiming that business and
society are intricately woven and that businesses had a responsibility to respond to
societal needs and pressures. The founding of the International Association of
Business and Society in 1990 reiterated the notion that all businesses around the
globe faced similar business and societal issues.

**THE PROCESS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF**
**PUBLIC RELATIONS**

In the most widely read textbooks published after 1970,
the process of public relations is described by using decision making models and
two-way communication. Cutlip and Center offered four stages in their public
relations model: fact-finding and feedback, planning and programming, action and
communication, and evaluation. This idea was slightly altered and became the four-step management process:

- Defining the problem (or opportunity);
- Planning and programming;
- Taking action and communicating; and
- Evaluating the program

Marston coined the well-known RACE framework, a derivation of the above model, which included four stages as well: research, action, communication, and evaluation.

These formulas set out to solve an organizational or image problem by using primary or secondary research techniques to uncover it and communication tactics (issue ads, news releases, and the like) to remedy it. These decision-making processes are well known in public relations education and practice today, although they are quite different from the publicity-seeking press agents and publicists of the early part of the 1900s who practiced one-way communication.

Grunig and Hunt referred to these processes in their description of two-way symmetrical communication. They maintained that with the two-way symmetrical model both the company and various publics can change attitudes and behavior as a result of a well planned, two-way flow of information. Rather than simply disseminating information, practitioners of this approach research the values of the stakeholder and attempt to define the issue, mutually, before communicating a corporate policy or a program regarding that issue. Public relations firms seeking excellence practice two-way symmetrical communication, which can foster better relationships leading to greater organizational effectiveness, stronger ethics, and higher profits.

Perhaps one reason for the staying power of these decision-making models, is that practicing public relations in this way tends to elevate the function to the manager level by using research and evaluation. Through these techniques, a practitioner can more easily comment on the public relations campaign’s relationship to an increase or decrease in public opinion or sales. As Kruckeberg and Starck discussed, most authors and practitioners believe public relations practiced in this way can be professional, ethical, and socially responsible and constitutes “real” public relations. Furthering this concept in their book, The Quandary of Public Relations, they stated that public relations is actually an attempt to restore and maintain a sense of community and that public relations today is best practiced as community relations—an essential function for a company interested in preserving a good reputation.

Practitioners, not just theorists, helped to forward the ideas of the two-way symmetrical model. In the mid-1970s, Harold Burson, one of the founders of Burson–Marsteller, began advocating that the role of a public relations executive is to provide qualitative evaluation of social trends, which will help the practitioner develop policies leading to a formal corporate response.

It was about this time that CSR and public relations began to sound most
similar. Bernays was quoted as saying simply, “Public relations is the practice of social responsibility” (p. 47) at the 1980 meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism at Boston University.27

James Grunig and Todd Hunt, two well-known communications scholars, devoted a chapter in their book to public relations and public responsibility in which they said, “public, or social, responsibility has become a major reason for an organization to have a public relations function” and two-way symmetrical communication is the best means by which to evaluate social responsibility (p. 48). Grunig and Hunt maintained that with the two-way symmetrical model both the company and the stakeholder can change attitudes and behavior as a result of a well planned, two-way flow of information.27

Not long after, managers and theorists began tinkering with the term public relations by referring to their work as reputation management or perception management. One of the world’s largest public relations agency, Burson–Marsteller uses the latter term almost exclusively with nary a mention of public relations in its collateral material. During most of the 1990s, practitioners at the top public relations agencies promoted their services as reputation management and were clearly focused on a two-way symmetrical model. Other than managing reputation, the public relations practitioner must maintain credibility, build solid internal and external relationships, and effectively manage issues.

Managing relationships has received a great amount of attention in the last several years. This perspective emphasizes building, nurturing, and maintaining organizational–public relationships rather than focusing on changing public opinion.28 This shift helps to emphasize the mutually beneficial relationship aspect of most definitions of public relations.29

CSR: PROCESS AND RESPONSIBILITY

One of the early theorists on the process of CSR was L. E. Preston, a consultant to the Royal Commission on Corporate Concentration in Canada.30 Part of that study included Preston’s ideas on the corporate social response matrix, the focus of which was the management of social issues by corporations.31 Managers followed a four-step process known as corporate social involvement. The stages included

- Awareness or recognition of an issue;
- Analysis and planning;
- Response in terms of policy development; and
- Implementation.

Earlier though, Preston and Post stated that companies had a responsibility to certain primary and secondary involvements with society, but not to issues unrelated to these involvements.32 This study helped to establish the idea that business and society are interdependent and was later expanded to include respon-
siveness strategies. Following Preston and Post, Frederick developed a later-
popularized shorthand for CSR and corporate social responsiveness by referring to
them as CSR\textsubscript{1} and CSR\textsubscript{2}, respectively.\textsuperscript{33}

Quite soon after, Carroll began to sharpen the definition of CSR\textsubscript{1} by stating
that businesses have four basic responsibilities to society: economic, legal, ethical,
and discretionary. He also outlined four main responsiveness strategies: reactive,
defensive, accommodative, and proactive.\textsuperscript{34}

Wartick and Cochran built on Carroll’s viewpoint of CSR\textsubscript{2} processes by
stating that in addition to being reactive or defensive, companies could be respons-
itive and interactive. The authors also defined CSP as “the integration of the
principles of social responsibility, the processes of social responsiveness, and the
policies developed to address social issues.”\textsuperscript{35} Miles felt that responsiveness, CSR\textsubscript{2},
had to do with a company’s external affairs strategy and design, which are both
dependant on top management philosophy.\textsuperscript{36} Miles represents one of the only
social issues in management researchers to meaningfully address the importance of
communication in social responsibility.

Wood also provided a model of corporate social performance in a well-
developed schema of principles, processes, and outcomes. The principles help to
describe CSR, which is based on legitimacy, public responsibility, and managerial
discretion. The process of CSR includes environmental assessment, stakeholder
management, and issues management. The final component refers to the out-
comes of corporate behavior on social impacts, programs, and policies.\textsuperscript{37}

THE SIMILARITIES OF PUBLIC
RELATIONS AND CSR

It becomes clear, by looking at the processes of CSR and
public relations, that these two disciplines have much in common. As Figure 1
shows, the main processes of each mirror one another in both content and evolu-
tion. Primarily, Wood’s description of corporate social performance and Cutlip
and Center’s four-step management process provide the central unifying factor
between public relations and social issues in management.

Beginning with the first stage of the management process, effective public
relations practitioners focus on research and definition of the problem, or in some
cases, the opportunity. Marston referred to this stage simply as research. This first
step relies on internal and external situational analyses to monitor the knowledge,
opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of those who are concerned with or affected by
the actions and policies of an organization.\textsuperscript{38}

This initial step provides the foundation for the entire management process
wherein communication is viewed as part of the solution, not the problem. The
internal situation analysis includes a communications audit, “a systematic docu-
mentation of an organization’s communication behavior for the purpose of un-
derstanding how it communicates with its publics.”\textsuperscript{39} The external situation anal-
ysis begins with a systematic review of the history of the problem and continues by
conducting a stakeholder analysis, that is, “gathering information about stakeholders: what they know, how they feel and what they do that is related to the problem.”

Lerbinger analyzed corporate use of research and identified four main categories: environmental monitoring, public relations audits, communication audits, and social audits. Environmental audits were used by organizations to gauge public opinion and observe social and political events and their impact on the organization; public relations audits identified the power and nature of relevant publics; communications audits surveyed the internal and external communication products used, and social audits assessed how the company performed as a corporate citizen.

Dozier, in his 1987 study of International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) members, found that practitioners using the two-way symmetrical approach to communication also used informal, mixed, and scientific research to scan environments.

This first stage of Cutlip’s four stage management process is very similar to Wood’s process of CSP; its first stage is an environmental assessment whose underlying assumption is that a company with a sound ability to assess its political and social environment would have the knowledge it needed to be more responsive to societal demands. Wood’s model would be more effective if it, too, considered researching the internal environment and using communication as an assessment tool. Still, Cutlip’s definition of research and Lerbinger’s explanation of effective research techniques parallel that of Wood’s environmental assessment phase of the

Figure 1. The Similarities of Public Relations and CRS Process.
CSP model. Miles’ research also aids in the joining of public relations and CSP models by including external affairs strategy and top management philosophy, an internal assessment, as an important element to social responsiveness.

Returning to Cutlip’s four stage management process, the second stage includes planning and programming, which is designed to pick up where research leaves off. After a problem or opportunity is defined, practitioners must devise a strategy for managing the problem or for making the best of the opportunity. Strategic planning in public relations involves making sound decisions about program goals and objectives, identifying key publics, setting policies, and determining strategies. All of this is done with specific outcomes and each stakeholder group’s unique needs in mind.

Similarly, Wood’s second phase of CSP is stakeholder management, or the process by which corporations try to “understand their stakeholder environments, manage their stakeholder relations, deal with stakeholder demands and expectations, and try to improve their own positions of power and influence within stakeholder networks.” Stakeholder categories in both Cutlip and Wood were identified; each described the importance of managing relationships with employees, stockholders, consumers, community groups, and government to the overall success of the corporation. Wood focused on categorizing stakeholder management research streams, whereas Cutlip explained how identifying these groups would help the effectiveness of the communication. It seems obvious that communication is at the very heart of managing relationships, yet CSR research largely overlooks this fundamental aspect.

In the third step of the public relations management process, the focus is implementation. Having defined the problem and identified a viable solution, one must take action and communicate that action. The goals and objectives identified earlier are now implemented through properly identified communications channels. Practitioners try to determine how best to convey the corporation’s message, while keeping in mind that “effective communication must be designed for the situation, time, place and audience” Wartick, Cochran, and Wood saw issues management as the third prong of the corporate social performance model. Defined as policies and programs for managing social issues, issues management is yet another area where public relations and CSR come together; both disciplines have used it in research and practice. In most companies, however, public affairs or corporate communications departments usually practice issues management. According to Heath, issues management requires the activities and values needed to support strategic planning, monitoring, communicating, and achieving responsibility; indeed, it is an amalgam of both communication and management.

Evaluation is the fourth and final stage in the management process. It is reasoned that effective public relations occur when communication activities achieve the program goals stated in the second step of Cutlip’s public relations management model. In recent years, communication effects have been studied by others as well to clarify what results are likely from a communications program and how managers measure the effectiveness of such programs.
The co-orientation model illustrates effective ways to set objectives when using two-way symmetrical communication and how the impact of communications programs can be evaluated. This model posits that issues can be understood, through research, in a way that brings the stakeholder’s values in line with those held by the corporation. Not only is this model useful in evaluation, but in the research and implementation stages as well. Broom stated that paramount to this approach is “the assumption that a public’s opinion and behavior are determined in part by its perceptions of the issue.” A researcher attempts to measure the discrepancy between the corporate definition of the issue and the stakeholders’ definition. If a discrepancy exists, the company may have a communications problem.

Broom reasoned that “reducing or eliminating the discrepancy becomes the motivation for the informational and persuasive messages” used by the corporation.

According to co-orientation, organizations and their stakeholders can hold accurate or inaccurate opinions of one another or may or may not understand one another’s motives, values, and actions. Broom encouraged communication managers to determine the congruency, or the extent to which the organization’s views of an issue are similar to its estimate of the stakeholders’ view. Broom further postulated that communication may have less to do with the extent to which parties agree or disagree than with the accuracy of their cross perceptions (co-orientation) of each other’s views.

Once again, there exists a striking similarity in Wood’s third dimension of the corporate social performance model, where the focus is on the outcomes of corporate and human action that can be observed and evaluated. It seems obvious that human action refers to the way in which one reacts to the communication methods used to express the CSP of the company. This third dimension does not, however, allow for the effect of the communication approach on various stakeholders. In other words, the outcome of CSP, the social impact, programs, and policies, could have a great deal to do with the method of communication used by the company.

Some social issues in management research has focused on communication and its relationship to social responsibility by stating that external affairs policies and procedures are important to social responsibility, but these studies, by design, do not delve much deeper than this statement of fact.

Dozier and Ehling, two communication researchers, concluded that symmetrical, strategic communications programs, such as those illustrated by Cutlip and Grunig, can achieve cognitive effects, but that strong behavioral effects are unlikely in the short term. Lasting behavioral changes can occur, however, when attitudes are formed through highly involved communication methods that stimulate thought. Communication research has also looked specifically into how best to communicate the social responsibility of an organization as well as the important relationship variables of the organization–public relationship.

Both the CSP and public relations fields are in need of more research into the value of their efforts if either is going to solidify a permanent place as a manage-
Recent developments in each suggest that reputation is an important area of future research.

In the public relations field, Marsteller began mentioning reputation management as an important element to the public relations function. Still others sought to describe the importance of communicating the value of social responsibility to various stakeholders and communicating that this responsibility lies with the public relations department. Throughout the 1990s, some public relations practitioners and theorists asserted that reputation management is just another word for “good” public relations. With the recognition of a more demanding and diverse public ushered in during the 1960s, public relations practitioners realized that if the company is to attract the best employees, raise capital effectively, become a good community member, or gain and retain loyal customers, then it must communicate in ways that protect the corporation’s reputation. To Fombrun one of the primary ways to build a sound corporate reputation is through effective communication.

In several recent management studies as well, reputation has been used as a measurement of corporate social performance. Using Fortune Magazine’s Corporate Reputation Index both McGuire et al. and Fombrun and Shanley found a positive correlation between CSP and financial performance. However, not all researchers found such a relationship.

Fombrun recently echoed some of the dissatisfaction with reputation studies and developed, with Harris Interactive, the Reputation Quotient, a measure of corporate reputation designed to measure the multistakeholder “halo” around a corporation. It looks into six basic building blocks of reputation under which 20 corporate attributes are classified. Most are based on perception, which is a prevailing theme in public relations research and evaluation.

**THE COMMUNICATION–MANAGEMENT APPROACH**

Even though the relationship between corporate public relations and CSR is similar in both its evolution and its modern practice, additional research into the ways in which to combine these areas to optimize organizational effectiveness must be conducted to aid those in the business and communications fields. It appears that public relations educators see the need to learn management skills, yet leaders in the social issues in management area tend to avoid looking into the importance of communication skills in management education. As Wood wrote, “more research is needed to illuminate the conditions under which companies will choose a particular response mode.”

The communication-management approach, or CMA, is an attempt to join the most compelling arguments made by CSR and public relations, that is, to use the knowledge of identifying stakeholder groups and a corporation’s responsibility to them with the ability to strengthen these relationships through effective communication. To be sure, it is an attempt to erase the lines that have been drawn
between communication and management. The approach relies on the acknowledgment that communication cannot occur in a vacuum without the input and support of management, and likewise, managing a company cannot occur, whether it's in a socially responsible manner or not, without communication. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship of CSR and public relations ideas, and how their overlap can enhance the overall management approach.

**Step One**

Communications managers and business managers recognize the need to analyze multiple stakeholders (sometimes referred to as publics) to develop a sense of the needs and wants of those who are either critical to the corporation’s existence or capable of expressing significant concern (primary and secondary stakeholders). To this end, conducting a stakeholder analysis is immensely helpful. One cannot effectively manage any stakeholder relationships by either conducting a communications analysis or a stakeholder analysis; both are necessary. The focus of the internal–external stakeholder audit includes the vital historical, social, and political dimensions of the issues facing stakeholders.

To understand and respond to the needs of these primary and secondary groups, one must get a complete picture of the issues and expectations. Grunig outlined the importance of such an approach:

The results should help corporate executives and their public relations managers to select social issues for attention and auditing and to plan a communication program to inform publics about responsible corporate acts.52

Out of this comprehensive audit will develop the stakeholder issue profile: their concerns, attitudes, and previous actions.
Step Two

Quickly after, or sometimes simultaneously, the past and present methods of communication should be analyzed, not only the communication from the corporation to the stakeholders, but also from the stakeholders to the corporation. Again, the historical, social and political arenas must be considered. Answers to the following questions are sought:

- What have the company and the stakeholders said in the past about the issue? (historical dimension)
- What has been said by politicians or activist groups? (political dimension)
- How does society frame this issue? (social dimension)

The communications analysis, which in all three dimensions includes mediated and nonmediated channels, relies heavily on the feedback element as well as action strategies and co-orientation explained above. If the communication analysis does not flow two ways, it is an incomplete picture. The historical, social, and political audits yield a set of facts that help to determine how to manage the communication effort going forward. This fact stream reveals a communication profile defining the quality of the relationship between each stakeholder group and the organization.

Also important to any communication effort is the determination of public opinion. Grunig’s schema of latent, aware, and active publics reveals an approach that is helpful in identifying perceptions of important potential audiences for the company’s messages.63

Likewise, analysis of the communications effort can determine the quality of the organizational–public relationship. J. Grunig, L. Grunig, and W. Ehling first outlined relationship dimensions of trust, reciprocity, openness and mutual satisfaction, understanding, and legitimacy as a way of identifying the quality of the relationship.64 Expanding on this research, Bruning and Ledingham offered a definition of the organization–public relationship which is the “state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political and/or cultural well-being of the other entity.”65 Management of the communications effort relies on the quality of the present relationship with the primary or secondary stakeholder, as revealed in the communication profile and the communication effects of various methods. This type of analysis is precisely what is missing in current CSR research.

Step Three

Taking the above research streams into consideration, one can establish, inform, mitigate, or maintain his or her relationship with key stakeholders. As a result of the communication profile a company may determine that its relationship is suffering because its reputation needs work, as in the case of Philip
Morris, or that the company must build more trust between itself and the immediate community, such as the case of Boston College and the Chestnut Hill neighborhood, or that the company needs to work on a particular legislative initiative to maintain its competitive advantage, similar to the “baby bells” helping to shape the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

In this way, it is helpful to briefly illuminate the case of Philip Morris. It has and will encounter stakeholders who are quite resistant to its message, that it is a responsible organization, because of stakeholders’ attitudes toward the company, although it is one of the most charitable organizations in the United States. These attitudes are based on long-standing historical, political, and social aspects of its behavior and the nature of its products. This and other vital feedback would be revealed through a comprehensive stakeholder and communications audit. Maintaining its current messages, that it is a multinational organization that sells more than cigarettes and that it does not encourage minors to smoke, would prove ineffective in promoting a better image.

Instead, Philip Morris must take into consideration the perceptions it has among its stakeholder groups as well as the fact stream that can be compiled on its legislative acts, advertising or public relations messages, and its comments on social and moral issues. As a result, it would want to opt for a mitigating approach to communicating with its audience whereby it attempts to soften its actions. As Grunig stated, “if the communication manager can plan communication with latent and aware publics in a potential conflict situation then he can mediate between organization and public—to facilitate understanding and perhaps accommodation—before actual conflict results.”

Although mitigating works for some organizations, other companies need to inform their stakeholders of new or changing information. Still, some companies, such as those in the e-commerce field, are more dependent on establishing an audience. The ideal sought by the manager is, however, to communicate with an aware public early enough so that the public does not form negative opinions about the organization and then use that negativity to influence government.

**CONCLUSION**

The connection between corporate public relations, and its use of effective communication and relationship management, and social responsibility is still developing. Specifically, questions as to the chosen message and how it affects the reputation or perception of an organization as responsible remain. However, it is clear that corporate public relations and CSR have, throughout this last century, a set of similarities, which provide clues to their integration and increased joint effectiveness. This connection suggests that public relations and CSR have similar objectives; both disciplines are seeking to enhance the quality of the relationship of an organization among key stakeholder groups. Both disciplines recognize that to do so makes good business sense.

The role that communication has in building these quality relationship is an
important one; one that is largely unrecognized by CSR researchers. Communication managers have the ability to scan the political, social, and historical environment regarding a myriad of issues; likewise, business competitiveness rests on knowing who will be affected by a company’s decisions. Therefore, it is critical that these disciplines acknowledge their similarities and work toward combining their efforts. Furthering the understanding of relationships and the effects of communication will continue to aid researchers and practitioners in the building of bridges between CSR and corporate public relations. The communication-management approach is offered as a part of this process.

Notes

7. Doug Newsome, op. cit., p. 44.
10. Newsome, op. cit., p. 49.
17. Ibid., p. 384.
18. Ibid., p. 384.
23. Ibid., p. 23.
29. Public Relations Society of America adopted a definition of public relations in 1987, which read, “public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends.”
31. Ibid., p. 244.
32. L. E. Preston and James E. Post, 1975., op. cit., p. 10.
33. William C. Frederick, op. cit., p. 10.
34. Archie B. Carroll, op. cit., pp. 497, 505.
35. S. L. Wartick and Phil Cochran, op. cit., p. 758.
39. Ibid., p. 323.
40. Ibid., p. 324.
43. Scott M. Cutlip, Allen H. Center, and Glen M. Broom, op. cit., p. 349.
50. Glen M. Broom, op. cit., p. 111.
51. Ibid., p. 111.
52. James E. Post, op. cit.; William C. Freeman, op. cit.; Robert H. Miles, op. cit.


63. Ibid., p. 740–741.

