

## Public Relations as an Exposure Tool for the Management.

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For better exposure on the market, companies can opt for different promotional mix tools: advertising, public relations, sales promotion, and personal selling, where each one has distinct characteristics, such as, costs, implementation peculiarities and the ability to bring about results. Companies have opted for the use of public relations in order to obtain greater credibility in their institutional and commercial arguments as well as distancing themselves from the competition through the simple commercial exposure brought on by advertising. In this reality, professionals have also used public relations instruments and tools in order to gain better exposure as well as personal and professional results. What we deal with in this article, with its base question, is how can a professional get better exposure through using public relations? In this sense, initially, we will develop the concept to clarify what this tool consistently is within the marketing context. Afterwards, we will present the instruments and discuss their applications in a contextualized manner with private companies and mainly with people. Through bibliographical and qualitative research with a non-probability sample of convenience, we detected the empirical use of public relation tools on the part of professionals without, however, the knowledge on their part of the structured concept of public relations.

**Key words:** Public Relations, Marketing Mix, Promotion

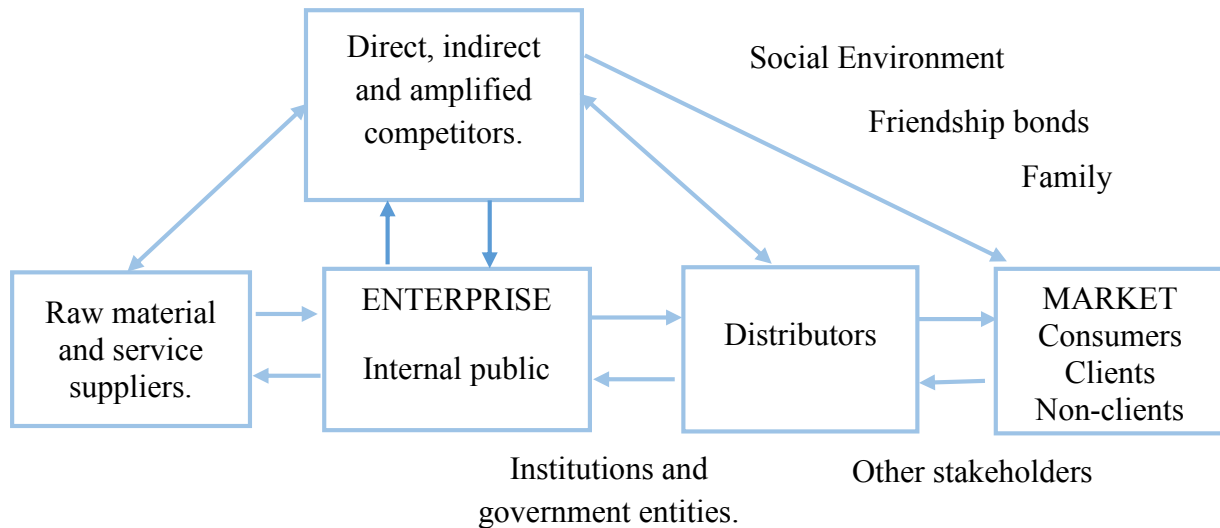
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### 1. Introduction

McCarthy (1960) created the marketing mix, as we know it and Kotler (1996) popularized its use as a way of understanding the process for creation, development and commercialization of products and services. Its applications have spread into different economic segments, such as tourism and hospitality, automotive, health and international business, among others. The product forms this marketing compound, where the consumer will be willing to invest in a value for his/her purchase and consumption. It will be distributed and the consumer informed of its existence through a sales promotion. This compound must be in balance, so that the consumer can purchase the product or service and have a sense of quality and satisfaction. However, depending on each situation, by the company or the market and the resources employed as well, the intensity of each tool should be molded in order to try to achieve the best commercial outcome. The selection of promoting instruments derives from the company's characteristics, market dynamics, situational aspects and the guidance of the company's business. In general, companies may have a more product-oriented guidance, such as towards marketing and sales. The greater part of product-oriented companies value tangible attributes like durability, performance and technical quality, for example, goods that are part of other products or services that involve or represent technology. On the other hand, sales-oriented enterprises generally sell products in markets where there is high competition and similar attributes. With their popularization and constant use of promotional tools, companies have become experienced in using and measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of their use and the results received. It was noticed that advertising, if well used, can bring interesting commercial results, however there is a limit to its use, where its growing use might not contribute proportionally to the commercial result. In this way, Kotler (1986) already highlighted the importance of using public relations as a differentiated way of global business strategy involving companies. These strategies are applied to the internal and external environment of the company, formed by different stakeholders. In this way, the analysis is based on, aside from a revision and bibliographical analysis, quantitative research, with non-structured interviews, the results of which are presented throughout this article. The sample, for convenience, is represented by ten consultants in the area of public relations, with the minimum of a post-graduate certificate and ten years' experience in the area. The interviews took place in São Paulo, the capital of the state of São Paulo, with the best academic and intellectual level, aside from being the largest industrial, commercial and service center in Brazil. The objective was to understand how a public relations tool could be used as a form of personal visibility, in detriment to the exclusive business usage.

## 2. Understanding the concept of Public Relations

According to Freeman (1984), a stakeholder is any group or individual in an organization, which may be affected by or affect the goals of a company. These groups can be businesses, entities and institutions that are part of the company's business environment. More recently, the term stockholder has taken greater evidence, where it can be categorized as those who have a financial and economic relationship, direct and indirect, with the company, as shareholders, major shareholders and minority shareholders and investors in general. Such evidence is related to the survival factor and economic and social contribution of the company towards the society and not simply as a mere financial argument. Each economic sector or even the company grants each participant a higher or lower amount, depending on structural or situational aspects.



**Figure 1. Corporate business environment.**

Source: Author. Adapted from Porter (1999).

From Figure 1, you can understand the importance of stakeholders within the values chain and system. According to Hitt (2013, p. 120), the value chain represents the position of the company on costs that allow for identifying how to employ the means and resources for implementing a solid business strategy. This is essentially the departmentalization of a company, in processes that must be dimensioned from the market demand (income) and organic and processes structure (which result in costs and expenses) will be needed to effectively meet the needs and desires of this same demand. According to Porter (1999), the value system is analyzed in a contextualized manner with the various stakeholders, from the creation of inputs for a company (throughputs) and transfer to the middle man (outputs) and on to the final consumer. All participants are closely linked and add benefits for the final consumer. The understanding of this whole process enables for the analysis and creation of corporate strategies and enables sustainable growth. According to Churchill Jr. and Peter (2013, pgs. 11 and 12), marketers can create direct and indirect relationships with their market. In the first, we have the professionals' efforts to know their client's portfolio in detail, particularities and acting in a personalized manner; in the second, the company has a name, brand and products that are recognized by the market and, in this way, it is not necessary to focus their efforts in an individualized manner. In both situations, companies and professionals must understand what the market values are in relation to its attributes and behave accordingly. As stated by Oliveira (2008), sustainable development should occur in environmental, economic and social spheres. This growth involves how parties complement and interact with each other, contributing in such a way that the result is greater than the mere sum of its parts. This holistic view allows one to realize the need for knowledge, integration and relationships that allow each participant to understand his or her role and importance within the process of consumer satisfaction. It is evident that the very existence of the company means it already contributes significantly to society because it is a generator of jobs and taxes that should automatically be reinvested into an economic and social infrastructure. After all these definitions and discussions, it is possible to formulate a definition of what public relations is. According to IPR (2014), the term has its origin in the

United States with Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays in 1906. It grew and evolved from its first application during the two great World Wars, having the government as one of the leading participants. One can identify, from the environment of business enterprises, the main groups of interest, according to Table 1.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Description</b>
Internal public.	Employees and collaborators that reflect the climate and organizational culture and which sometimes serve as "ambassadors" for the company's image. Integrated and properly motivated with strategies such as those of internal marketing, can help to consolidate the company's image.
Consumers.	Formed by all those who are able to consume the product, service or even make use of the brand or of the concept of the company, business or idea. It is a broader market, whose conquest must be one of the guiding objectives of a company.
Clients.	Those consumers who purchase products and services from a particular company, independent of purchase frequency. In other words, maintain a commercial relationship with the company, one of the goals being an increase in purchase frequency.
Non-Clients.	Consumer customers who consume products and services of competitors and who might change their preference, duly motivated by the attributes and their needs and desires.
Community.	Environment where the company and professionals are situated and where all relationships, including exchange, are carried out. Can also designate specific subgroups of individuals that have to be duly monitored.
Suppliers.	Companies that supply raw material and services that enter the manufacturing process of other products. These companies should be treated as partners, because the company depends partly on them for the composition of the product or service, as well as the good performance of the company itself.
Distributors	Companies that sell products and services to certain markets. Like the suppliers, they should be the company's partners and they constitute as one of "contact" points with the company's clientele.
Shareholders and investors.	Individuals and legal entities who hold part of the financial and economic capital of other companies, commonly called stockholders. They can influence the company's decisions in accordance with the way in which it has invested its capital.
Media.	Resources such as press relations agencies, advertising agencies and producers, magazines, newspapers, television and other types that serve as a means and form of communication for the company.
Educational entities.	Higher education institutions (HEI) play an important role in the formation of a student and citizen. In this way, the company's presence is essential, whether in an institutional aspect, as well as in the provision of products and services. Today's student can be tomorrow's professional.
Religious entities.	These entities have a great homogeneity of ideologies and habits, where news and opinions can spread very quickly in services and congregations.
Family.	Although corporately it does not appear within the so-called stakeholders, its importance is quite relevant to the corporate professional, influencing in many cases their results and professional performance.
Other groups.	Due to market dynamics, new groups and subgroups can arise and the company must be prepared to adapt their strategies. Such as the subgroups of generation y and z, render analyses and differentiated actions, because they possess different psychographic profiles.

**Table 1. Groups of interest**

Source Author.

The analysis of the internal and external environment of a company enables for the identification of opportunities and threats as well as monitoring the anticipation of problems, and the construction and development of solutions. In addition to these groups, the opening of international markets favored the mobility of people of other ethnicities, ideologies, beliefs, habits and customs, demanding differentiated forms of perception and treatment. Far from being a closed and complete definition, it at least allows that the company and the professional can have a guide to follow, where the actions depend on how they visualize the business environment, interpret it, perform the diagnosis and delineate personal and corporate

objectives and goals. Therefore, in a general way, as reported by five owners of public relations firms, it has the following functions:

- To develop institutional research on market opinion and organizational climate. Generally, it is an area subject to the presidency or related to the marketing department or even public relations, (although the latter department does not usually exist in companies). The polls aim at maintaining what has already been solidified as well as avoiding potential problems.
- To develop an efficient and effective communication program for internal and external audiences, where the process should be a continuous one. Resources such as newsletters, email marketing, press releases, among others contribute to the formation and maintenance of a positive corporate image.
- To develop communication programs in an integrated manner along with the resources and social media that, in fact, are service providers and collaborates that increase the intensity and opportunities for communication and business.
- To work in conjunction with the foreign press and communication advisors, providing news releases and generating constructive news opportunities.
- To create forms and conditions for "listening to" the internal public and the market, either by the usual resources, as well as by also creating situations where the company can receive data and valuable information from the market.
- To add values to strategic decisions, recommending actions and content to their employees as well as internal and external partners.
- To meet the different types of public-interest groups. Some companies adopt the term *ombudsman* to refer to the specific position, which aims at diplomatically and institutionally attending to complaints, suggestions and comments from their customers.
- To create and develop events aimed at maintaining image and relationship links.

Another function, although not the fully defended by the interviewees, is the corrective action of situations that have already occurred and that may affect the company's corporate image. Through research and information systems, it is possible to monitor and identify in advance situations that may occur and may negatively affect the company. At any time, this area should be a simple "fire extinguisher", as we have occasionally witnessed in our day-to-day life. Janissek-Muniz, Lesca and Freitas (2006), argue for the utilization of Strategic Anticipative and Collective Intelligence, in order to understand, by means of information systems and scenario constructions, a visualization of the future environment where the company will be inserted. In this way, anticipate and adapt as of today the changes and transformations of the future.

### **2.1. The importance of social networks**

Their participation in the daily life of individuals and businesses, even for those who are not inserted, is well known. A large part of the population participates actively in social networks, opining on different issues and sharing others that they find interesting. In this way, positive or negative opinions can spread in the virtual environment, influencing other reviews as well as consumption and the image of a company. Many companies have chosen to be present in social networks, disseminating their products, services and news. Their presence should be undertaken proactively, where the company should seek to attract its stakeholders (through games, promotions and the other similar activities) as well as the spontaneity of the people who participate in the same networks. Companies should monitor quotes and comments on networks, through search engines, in order to identify possible preventive communication disturbances, as well as strengthening spontaneous praise. Although it is still impossible to monitor them completely, companies must be prepared for the different situations as well as use all available ways and means for monitoring. The importance of social media was proved once again in the American elections of 2012, where Obama was re-elected with the slogan "*Four More Years*", with more than 20 million twitters. In the same way, in the Brazilian elections on *Facebook* in 2014, where part was divided between the good or bad of each candidate or political party. In this way, apart from the insertion in social media, content management is important as well as the public's participation, whether by the number and frequency of

accesses, or for the answers and opinions posted. Usually, searches can be incorporated in order to understand the current situation of the company.

### 3. The Mix of Public Relations

Public relations can make use of various instruments and actions, which must be used in order to combine the objectives of communication with the available resources of the company. Among the more usual ones, as already evidenced in reports, one can highlight:

Instruments	Description
Social and corporate events.	An action organized within a focus that aims at gathering individuals and corporations in the sense of establishing a justification of communication and strengthening bonds of relationships. It may involve anything from institutional dates to those of social and community order.
Fairs and exhibitions.	Opportunities created to display products, services, companies and professionals in an organized manner. Usually involves the use of physical space, or a booth, and must have as a goal promoting and creating relationship bonds, as well as the goal of selling.
Cocktails and meetings.	Social and commercial events that aim to gather, promote discussions, integrate interest groups in an effective manner, needing a prepared agenda to identify who the participants will be, as well as the actions during, and after the event is over.
Sponsorships.	Incentives and mechanisms that aim to integrate and complement the values system of others, in order to gain visibility or even tax exemption, since some categories of sponsorships are backed by specific laws, such as the Rouanet Act.
Actions that involve social and environmental responsibility.	Opportunities integrated with society, in order to create, maintain and develop the company's institutional and professional image. The company must identify and define their reasons with care and how their actions will be developed and disseminated, so that they will not be characterized as a simple marketing activity.
Direct mail and e-mail marketing.	Tools that aim to expand in a personalized manner the contact between the company and the market. They should be used sparingly, so as not to generate an adverse sentiment, since, for example, it is often unpleasant to receive spam.
Lectures and seminars.	Generally, an institutional exposure aimed at creating a sense of credibility within a given audience. These events usually bring together a large number of focused participants, which contributes significantly to positive communication feedback.
Participation in social networks.	A contemporary business and personal obligation of those who need to integrate other relationship groups or even the sharing of a collaborative environment.

**Table 2. Comprised of public relations**

Source: Author, According to research with professionals in the areas of Public Relations.

For each instrument, you need a project that seeks to identify your need, theme, contextualized contribution with other company events and company departments, budget and goals and objectives for results, within a broader view of the company's strategic planning. In addition, the formats and especially the contents and their use must be within the objectives of the Integrated Communication Media (ICM). The press officer is a service provider that can be outsourced or be an area within the company. As a company area, it must be subordinate to the strategic level or be part of the marketing and business. Its main assignments being: Identify the needs of your client portfolio exposure; Be in constant contact with the media and other stakeholders of each client, in order to identify opportunities for inserting facts, opinions and news; Act in the form of a partnership, in order to leverage business from their customers and not simply be a service provider; To behave ethically, because you can work with companies in the same area; Submit regular reports presenting the results of their work to their customers. Note that, at the expense of the high advertising investment, assertive use can create an interesting spontaneous display that sometimes can promote more long lasting links to personal and commercial relationships. It is also important to note that there must be a reason for using this tool, a time when actions should not be random, but within a



context, that makes sense for the company and the external environment. A good example of this is the use of commemorative dates, such as the anniversary of a foundation, of the founder, or another significant date. In addition to the observations by Oliveira, and within the optics that there must be a rationale for a public relations activity, you can add social and environmental responsibility and ethics as elements that enable sustainable development. Social and environmental responsibility allows for reaching out to a sometimes-differentiated consumer group, permitting less commercial exposure and better credibility. As reported by Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan (2010, p. 140), "*companies need to solve social challenges and participate in the search for solutions*", since they may offer benefits geared to welfare, philanthropy and social responsibility for its employees as well as those who depend, directly or indirectly, on their efforts. As for ethics, Srour (2003; p. 50) states that:

*Business decisions are not innocuous, palliatives or exempted from consequences: they carry enormous irradiation power by the effects they cause. In practical terms, they affect the stakeholders, the agents that maintain ties with each organization, i.e. participants or stakeholders.*

These participants can be the internal public, shareholders as well as all those who are part of the value system. According to André (2001, p. 10), the government should legislate in reaction to professional ethics, "*and there should not, however, be any imposing legal construction*," because they are a social practice. This practice allows for the establishment of social rights and responsibilities important to eliciting respect and collaboration in the stocks of the companies. Acting in this way, relationships between stakeholders can become more consistent and long lasting.

#### **4. The use of Public Relations by the corporate executive**

Education and knowledge enable an individual to reflect and have the ability to generate work and, consequently, their economic and social inclusion. Employability, because of education and knowledge, is a term that can have different definitions and connotations. McDaniel & Gitman (2011), state that the company must avoid "brain drain", i.e. the evasion and high turnover of executives, through training programs, mentoring and education that enables for the maintenance culture of organizational talents. With this, the aim is to preserve, in addition to the costs and expenses related to hiring and dismissal, maintaining the intellectual capital of the company. Thinking in this way, one can also understand the necessary contrast: the development and maintenance of professional content, being their sole responsibility. The formation of the individual is very important with regard to the content needed for providing good service, mainly in technical functions. This training may be acquired from an education, as well as through experience and self-teaching, which is not limited only to academic training. People may have certain skills, which usually are related to processes and functions, and that can turn into personal and professional skills, according to the different challenges that will arise in the course of each individual's life. Postures, behaviors and attitudes refer to interpretations and reactions of each individual to each situation, which for example, can lead to an idea of proactivity. The definition leads to a great paradox, where years ago it was considered that companies provided a career plan where the professionals should fit in. However, stemming from the professional's capacity to generate results for this company, it should negotiate and consider the position and compensation compatible with the capabilities and individual skills. Unfortunately, Brazilian legislation still does not consider this reality, limiting then the names of positions and salaries in detriment to the individual characteristics of each professional. Each professional must have an individual career plan, where he/she can relate features with goals and objectives, in order to build in a more solid and consistent way and according to the opportunities that will appear. This portfolio, more than a personal bureaucratic requirement, aims to prove that such an individual has a particular competence. As an example, photographs, documents and certificates can substantiate that, the individual has experience in travel and international lectures and, consequently, international mobility, a highly valued item in large multinational companies.

Human presence is noticeable both in the chain as well as in the values system. In this way, the professional's contribution is essential, as both manager and participant of the process of the transformation of inputs and resources, as well as the consumer market. In many cases, the presence of a particular professional can be the element of economic and social transformations and changes. In addition, it is this way of thinking that permeates the focus of this article. Although the corporate professional has important

family, social and professional ties, this cannot only limit his/her exposure to them. He or she should seek to expand their relationships, whenever possible and preferably in a planned manner, their links to other stakeholders, such as entities and institutions like the church, educational institutions, among others. Some companies encourage their workforce to be speakers and surrender part of their time to interviews and reports, favoring spontaneous exhibition. In an unstructured interview with ten consultants in the area of public relations, with the minimum of post-graduate training courses and a minimum of ten years' experience in the field, highlighting initially a few ways to create the necessary visibility. Highlighted, initially, some of the ways for creating the necessary visibility taken from the interviews:

- Although it does not need to be formal, create a slogan for yourself and share it with others. Eventually, we heard about a person who did not have a focus, which allows us to realize that this person may have multivariate attitudes without any guidance to follow in a more committed manner. Different careers such as actors George Clooney and Liam Neeson make it possible to identify a consistency in the jobs performed.

- Participate intensely in social events. Sometimes, the professional is compelled to devote many hours, in addition to the normal professional activities, sacrificing other peoples like family, neighbors and friends. One must balance his/her participation in each category of peoples, giving due attention and importance to each member. Avoid being a workaholic and be more of a "socioaholic".

- Participate intensely in charitable events. Try to devote part of your efforts to activities aimed at social welfare in the community, even if there is no financial contribution because it assists in spontaneously building a positive image.

- Participate actively in social networks, inserting photographs and news periodically, in order to highlight current events even if people do not have the opportunity to have your direct contact. Keep yourself "well known" in the market.

- Create opportunities for relationships, in the sense of being an active part of the process and not merely a spectator trying to take advantage of situations that arise. Personal dates and events, such as birthdays, wedding anniversary, among others, should be used as grounds for events and relationships.

- Manage your relationships and do not look for people only when the need arises. An email, a phone call, a letter or even a provocation in social networks help create a favorable *recall* of one's name.

- Be a quarterback to lead your team to a larger goal. Be a strategist, where you can make things happen, and do not be a mere spectator.

- Be a manager where you can reconcile your personal and corporate resources in order to achieve the best productivity. Be tactical, where you can manage your personal and professional life.

- Do not wait for your subordinates to do something. Do it yourself when needed. Be operative, always looking for results.

- Do things according to plan and in the time required. Be effective!

- Be perceptive, having the ability to perceive changes and environmental transformations and the power to promote the changes and transformations required.

- Be resilient, having the ability to adapt to changes, transformations and situations that happen and that are out of your control. No matter what, be assertive.

Bingham and Conner (2010; p. 103) state that:

*The power of the collaborative content tools is in the ability to offer a single address where people gather their ideas, analyze them with their peers and publish in a way that can be revised and revisited, representing multiple points of view.*

The creation, use and participation of social networks and collaborative environments allow for a spontaneous exhibition, in which a professional must identify the content and periodicity of updates and participation from clearly defined goals and communication objectives. Therefore, in general, the greater the number of participants, the greater ability should the owner of the environment have in order to integrate the group. Deepening more in ways to create the necessary visibility, you have social intelligence, emotional intelligence and ethics as fundamental professional pillars. According to Albrecht (2006, p. 3),

social intelligence is "*the ability to relate well with other people and get them to cooperate with you.*" This involves human behaviors, attitudes and postures that allow the individual to be able to interpret signals, analyze them and turn them into socially acceptable actions by the group. It would be very reductionist to indicate the skills that make people have SI, because all the different situations where it can be applied are diverse and complex. It is in constant evolution, where it will require the perception and resilience needed for good social practices. As a provocation, one can affirm that a professional must have the interpretative and analytical capacity to see, from another angle, data and facts that lead to new paradigms.

Within the previous concept, we highlight emotional intelligence. Barlow and Maul (2001, p. 27), discuss the importance of human emotions and consciousness of the particular emotional states of each one, managing and leading our emotional states in a more convergent sense. Although morals and ethics are required under any circumstances, the executive should monitor and manage opinions and comments, which can be abstract and even inaccurate because of situational and even multicultural aspects. They will not always accept opinions, but the important thing is to be sure of their convictions. An illustrative case is that of Fernanda Lima, who attended the drawing for the round-robin groups of the teams for the World Soccer Cup held in Brazil, whose image was boycotted in some countries due to the neckline of her dress. Building lasting relationships requires planning and experience. According to Robinette, Brand and Lenz (2002, p. 116), emotional marketing should not only be used to meet the needs and demands of the market, but to create lasting connections with their clients from defined and planned processes. With this, it will be possible to obtain the loyalty and long-lasting relationship of your client. As reported by Grande (2008, p. 106), personality can be interpreted under a western and eastern point of view. In the first, there is individualistic behavior, where the "I" prevails throughout all of the relationship processes. In the second, we have a more collectivist behavior where there is no single dissociation. From the reflections of this chapter, one can realize that the desired behavior must be a mixture of each point of view, where the interpretation of the environment in which the individual is inserted must take into account the social, emotional, moral and ethical aspects. With these guidelines, you can make the professional have a long-lived and very constructive life.

## 5. Conclusions

Marketing was created to meet the demands, needs and wishes of the market and has been enhanced over the course of time, according to the changes and transformations of the environment and consumers. Similarly, the tools (marketing mix) and marketing instruments have been evolving in order to meet the different demands of the enterprises as well as the markets. In this way, the public relations tool has distinguished itself as a smart and strategic way to create better visibility and exposure of the company, brand, product and professional. This exposure can bring better credibility to the professional's argument, seeing that their appearance differs from traditional advertising, the contents of which often lead to a more commercial and less institutional perception. A relevant point is that the individuals are not isolated; their actions are getting the due reactions, thus having the need for an integrated and holistic vision with all the partakers of the market – the so-called stakeholders. Due to their quantitative character, we recommend, in future studies, going deeper into the methods with the Focus Group, raising the expected results and presenting case studies that prove the importance of Public Relations within the point of view of the professional. A systemic vision, but open to innovations and creativity, can lead the individual to personal and professional growth and the evolution required for their competitive differentiation and a well-deserved visibility on the market. With that, the big paradigm that the company is the only one responsible for the professional growth of its internal public is broken. Quite on the contrary!

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