

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND

FACULTY OF COMMERCE

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

MAIN EXAMINATION PAPER (2006)

DEGREE/DIPLOMA AND YEAR OF STUDY: DEGREE V

TITLE OF PAPER: PUBLIC RELATIONS (BA523)

TIME ALLOWED: THREE (3) HOURS

EXAMINATION INSTRUCTIONS:

1. NUMBER OF QUESTIONS IN THIS PAPER: 6.
2. ANSWER SECTION A, WHICH IS COMPULSORY AND ANSWER ANY THREE (3) QUESTIONS FROM SECTION B.
3. THE MARKS AWARDED FOR A QUESTION/PART OF QUESTION ARE AS INDICATED AT THE END OF EACH QUESTION/PART OF QUESTION.

NOTE:

YOU ARE REMINDED THAT IN ASSESSING YOUR WORK, ACCOUNT WILL BE GIVEN OF THE ACCURACY OF RESPONSES, LANGUAGE AND THE GENERAL QUALITY OF EXPRESSION, TOGETHER WITH THE LAYOUT AND PRESENTATION OF YOUR FINAL ANSWER.

THIS PAPER MUST NOT BE OPENED UNTIL THE INVIGILATOR HAS GRANTED PERMISSION.

GOOD LUCK !!!

SECTION A (compulsory)

Case: Researching a Position for Impilo Clinic

The administrator at Impilo Clinic confronted a problem that he hoped research could help solve. Impilo, although a good hospital, was smaller and less well known than most other hospitals in Swaziland. In its area alone, it competed with ten other hospitals and clinics. Impilo needed a position that it could call unique to attract patients to fill its beds.

For along time, Impilo Administrator, Lwazi Mkhonta, had believed in the principle that truth will win out. Build a better mouse trap, and the world will build a path to your door. Erect a better hospital, and your beds will always be 98% filled. Unfortunately, Mkhonta learned, the real world seldom recognises truth at first blush.

In the real world, more often than not, perception will triumph. Because people act on perceptions, those perceptions become reality. Successful positioning, Mkhonta learned, is based on recognising and dealing with people's perceptions. And so, Mkhonta set out with research to build an existing perception about Impilo. He decided to conduct a communications audit to help form a different position for Impilo.

Interview process

As a first step, Mkhonta talked to doctors, nurses and trustee to gather data about their perceptions, not only of Impilo, but also of other hospitals in Swaziland. He did this to get a clear and informed picture of where competing hospitals ranked in the minds of knowledgeable people.

For example, the Mbabane Clinic had something for everybody: exotic care, up-to-date Medical equipment, sufficiently staffed with very friendly and good staff. The one problem, "everyone agreed was that nobody knows about us".

Attribute testing

The second step in Mkhonta's research project was to test attributes important in health care. He did this to learn what factors community members felt were most important in assessing health care.

Respondents were asked to rank eight factors in order of importance and to tell Mkhonta and his staff how each of the surveyed hospitals rated on those factors. The research instrument used a semantic differential scale of 1-10, with 1 the worst and ten the best possible score. Questionnaires were sent to two groups: 100 area residents and 500 former Impilo residents.

Results tabulation

The third step in the research was to tabulate the results in order to determine community priorities. Among area residents who responded, the eight attributes were ranked accordingly:

1. Surgical care	9.23
2. medical equipment	9.20
3. cardiac care	9.16
4. emergency services	8.96
5. range of medical services	8.63
6. friendly nurses	8.62
7. moderate costs	8.59
8. location	7.94

After the attributes were ranked, the hospitals in the survey were ranked for each attribute. On advanced surgical care, the most important feature to area residents, Mbabane clinic ranked first, Mankayane Hospital a close second. Impilo was far down on the list. The same was true of virtually every other attribute. Indeed, on nursing care, an area in which its staff thought Impilo excelled, the hospital came in last in the minds of area residents. Mkhonta was not surprised. The largest hospitals in Swaziland scored well on most attributes; Impilo trailed the pack.

However, the ranking of hospitals scores according to former Impilo patients revealed an entirely different story. On Surgical care, for example, although Mbabane Clinic still ranked first, Impilo came in a close second. Its scores improved similarly on all other attributes. In fact, in nursing care, where Impilo came in last on the survey of area resident, among former patients its score was higher than that of any other hospital. It also ranked first in terms of convenient location and second in terms of costs, range of services, and emergency care.

Conclusions and recommendations

The fourth step in Mkhonta's research project was to draw some conclusions to determine what the data revealed. He reached three conclusions:

1. Mbabane Clinic was still number one in terms of area hospitals
2. Impilo ranked at or near the top on most of the attributes, according to those who actually experienced care there.
3. Former Impilo patients rated the hospital significantly better than the general public did.

In other words, thought Mkhonta, most of those who try Impilo like it. The great need was to convince more people to try the hospital.

But how could this be accomplished with a hospital? Other marketers generate trial by sending free samples in the mail, offering cents-off coupons, hold free demonstrations, and the like. Hospitals are more limited in the area. Mkhonta's challenge was to launch a communication campaign to convince prospects to see other area hospitals, in a different, less favourable light or to give people a specific reason to think about trying Impilo. In other words, he needed to come up with a communication strategy that clearly differentiated Impilo-admittedly, among the smallest area hospitals from the bigger, less personal hospitals. Mkhonta was confident that the data he had gathered from the research project were all needed to come up with a winning idea. He then set out to propose his recommendations.

QUESTION 1

- a. What kind of communication program would you launch to accomplish Mkhonta's objectives? Please give justification for your answer. (10 marks)
- b. What would be the cornerstone- the theme- of your communication program? (5 marks)
- c. What would be the specific elements of your programme? (15 marks)
- d. In launching the programme, what specific steps would you follow-both inside and outside the hospital- to build support? (10 marks)
- Total (40 marks)**

Section B

(Answer any three questions from this section)

QUESTION 2

Corporate responsibility is expected from all practicing organisations; as a Public Relations expert, advise your organisation on the specific aspects that should be adhered to in exhibiting corporate responsible behaviour.

(20 marks)

QUESTION 3

The Public Relations practitioner should understand the laws that govern public opinion, briefly discuss Hardley Cantril laws of public opinion.

(20 marks)

QUESTION 4

The Swazi Government intends to stop funding students in the near future, a situation that may disadvantage the country in general and a lot of students from accessing higher level of education. The University of Swaziland in collaboration with the students and other civic groups plan to stage a Public Relations Campaign. In preparation for this important event, please advise on how to plan effectively for this event.

(20 marks)

QUESTION 5

- a. Briefly discuss the rationale for evaluating the public relations research programme. (10 marks)
- b. The success of the evaluation exercise is depended on numerous factors. Discuss these factors. (10 marks)

QUESTION 6

You have been approached by MTN to help them embark on a Public relations research programme; design a questionnaire covering all the significant aspects in PR. (20 marks)