

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND

FACULTY OF COMMERCE

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

MAIN EXAMINATION PAPER

MAY, 2011

(FULL TIME / IDE STUDENTS).

TITLE OF PAPER : PUBLIC RELATIONS

COURSE CODE : BA 523 / IDE BA 523

TIME ALLOWED : THREE (3) HOURS

- INSTRUCTIONS :**
- (1) TOTAL NUMBER OF QUESTIONS IN THIS PAPER IS SIX (6)**
 - (2) THE PAPER CONSISTS OF SECTIONS A AND B.**
 - (3) ANSWER THE QUESTION IN SECTION A WHICH IS COMPULSORY AND ANY THREE (3) QUESTIONS IN SECTION B.**
 - (4) THE MARKS ALLOTTED FOR A QUESTION /PART OF A QUESTION ARE INDICATED AT THE END OF EACH QUESTION / PART OF QUESTION.**
 - (5) WHERE APPLICABLE, ALL WORKINGS / CALCULATIONS MUST BE CLEARLY SHOWN.**

NOTE: MAXIMUM MARKS WILL BE AWARDED FOR GOOD QUALITY LAYOUT, ACCURACY, AND PRESENTATION OF WORK.

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

GOOD LUCK !!!

SECTION A: COMPULSORY**QUESTION 1 Read the case below.****Case: Researching a Position for Alan Louis General**

The administrator at Alan Louis General Hospital confronted a problem that he hoped research could help solve. Alan Louis General, although a good hospital, was smaller and less well known than most other hospitals in Bangor, Maine. In its area alone, it competed with 20 other medical facilities. Alan Louis needed a "position" that it could call unique to attract patients to fill its beds

For a long time, the Alan Louis administrator, Sven Rapcorn, had believed in the principle that truth will win out. Build a better mousetrap, and the world will beat a path to your door. Erect a better hospital and your beds will always be 98 percent filled. Unfortunately, Rapcorn learned, the real world seldom recognizes 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, Rapcorn learned, is based on recognizing and dealing with people's perceptions. And so, Rapcorn set out with research to build on existing perceptions about Alan Louis General.

He decided to conduct a communications audit to help form a differentiable "Position" for Alan Louis General.

Interview Process

As a first step, Rapcorn talked to his own doctors and trustees to gather data about their perceptions not only of Alan Louis General but also of other hospitals in the community. He did this to get a clear and informed picture of where competing hospitals ranked in the minds of knowledgeable people.

For example, the University Health Center had something for everybody-exotic care, specialized care, and basic bread-and-butter care. Bangor General was a huge, well-respected hospital whose reputation was so good that only a major tragedy could shake its standing in the community. Mercy Hospital was known for its trauma center. And so on.

As for Alan Louis itself, doctors and trustees said that it was a great place to work, that excellent care was provided, and that the nursing staff was particularly friendly and good. The one problem, everyone agreed, was that "nobody knows about us."

Attribute Testing

The second step in Rapcorn'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 hospital care.

Respondents were asked to rank eight factors in order of importance and to tell Rapcorn and his staff how each of the surveyed hospitals rated on those factors. The research instrument used a semantic differential scale of 1 to 10, with 1 the worst and

10 the best possible score. Questionnaires were sent to two groups: 1,000 area residents and 500 former Alan Louis patients

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, Bangor General ranked first, with University Health Center a close second. Alan Louis 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 Alan Louis excelled, the hospital came in last in the minds of area residents. Rapcorn was not surprised. The largest hospitals in town scored well on most attributes; Alan Louis trailed the pack.

However, the ranking of hospital scores according to former Alan Louis patients revealed an entirely different story. On surgical care, for example, although Bangor General still ranked first, Alan Louis came in a close second. Its scores improved similarly on all other attributes. In fact, in nursing care, where Alan Louis came in last on the survey of area residents, 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 Rapcorn's research project was to draw some conclusions to determine what the data had revealed.

He reached three conclusions:

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

In other Words, thought Rapcorn, most of those who try Alan Louis 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, holding free demonstrations, and the like. Hospitals are more limited in this area. Rapcorn's challenge was to launch a communications Campaign to convince prospects to see other area hospitals in a different, less favorable light or to give people a specific reason to think about trying Alan Louis. In other words, he needed to come up with a communications strategy that clearly differentiated Alan Louis-admittedly, among the smallest of area hospitals-from the bigger, less personal hospitals. Rapcorn was confident that the data he had gathered from the research project were all he needed to come up with a winning idea.

He then set out to propose his recommendations.

Questions:

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

[Total marks 40]

SECTION B

Answer any three (3) questions from this section.

QUESTION 2

Public relations has developed beyond its traditional role of press agency though still fairly young compared with other management disciplines. Discuss the trends that have contributed to the growth of public relations today. [20marks]

QUESTION 3

The argument for social responsibility maintains that if organizations wish to sustain their positions of power in society, they have to accept their social responsibilities. Discuss. [20 marks]

QUESTION 4

The director of Human Resource has been offered an interview opportunity on the Swazi TV channel. The focus is on MTN local Recruitment Policy. As public relations media specialist, how would you assist the director such that he gets the best results from the media interview? [20marks]

QUESTION 5

Corporate responsibility is expected from all practicing organizations. As a Public relations expert, advise your organization on the specific aspects that should be adhered to in exhibiting corporate responsible behaviour. [20 marks]

QUESTION 6

- a. Public opinion affects most businesses and public relations practitioners need to measure, through surveys all the dimensions the public opinion can take. Discuss these dimensions [10 marks]
- b. List and describe the various ways in which you might categorize publics [10 marks]