

# **UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND**

## **FACULTY OF COMMERCE**

### **DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

#### **MAIN EXAMINATION PAPER**

**SECOND SEMESTER: MAY 2015**

**TITLE OF PAPER : PUBLIC RELATIONS**

**COURSE CODE : BA 523: IDE**

**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.**

**SECTION A: COMPULSORY**

**QUESTION 1**      **Read the case and answer the questions that follow**

**CASE STUDY: BOXED IN AT JACK IN THE BOX**

Food poisoning is a food company's worst nightmare. When hundreds of customers complain of symptoms and three die, the firm faces communications and other problems that are severe. Thus in January 1993, when Jack in the box, a subsidiary of Food Maker, Inc ... was besieged by customers in the Northwest who suddenly became ill after eating the company's hamburgers, the firm momentarily panicked.

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Complaints began in Seattle and spiraled immediately. All told, some 800 people complained of food poisoning symptoms, with 477 infected by the painful and occasionally deadly - Escherichia coli 0157:117, bacteria that damage the kidneys.

Of those who complained 144 were hospitalized. A majority of the seriously ill were children, who had to undergo kidney dialysis for weeks. Three children died, but only one was directly linked to Jack in the Box.

Immediately upon being appraised of the situation. Jack in the Box voluntarily stopped selling all hamburger products in Washington State.

"Although this is an isolated case, we are taking every precaution to ensure that we meet and exceed health department standards," said the company's vice president in announcing the voluntary halt

Three days later, as press reports of additional cases of bacterial infection emerged. Jack in the Box rushed its president to Seattle for a morning news conference. President Robert Nugent began the session by saying: "I would like to express my deepest sympathies to those who have been stricken -especially the children. I pray that they all have speedy and complete recovery". President Nugent went on to describe the stellar historical record of Jack in the Box in Washington and then acknowledged that, "The problem is in fact due to contaminated hamburger".

However, the president suggested that the source of the contaminated hamburger was not Jack in the Box but rather a Northwest supplier with whom the company dealt. Further, said President Nugent, although Jack in the Box was accused of "violating the state's cooking procedures," the facts were the following: "Our cooking procedures were established to comply

clients that its stores products were safe.

**QUESTIONS:-**

1. Was Jack in the Box's management right in reacting so quickly to the contamination problem? Give your reasons. **[10 marks]**
2. How would you assess the strategy of spreading the blame for the contaminated hamburger. **[10 marks]**
3. Many companies faced with crisis fail to manage their communications effectively to the public. Explain the communication rules to keep in mind during crisis. **[20 marks]**

**[TOTAL MARKS 40]**

**SECTION B**

**ANSWER ANY THREE (3) QUESTIONS FROM THIS SECTION:-**

**QUESTION 2**

- a) We have seen that Public Relations today has developed beyond its traditional role of a press agency. Discuss the five trends that have contributed greatly to the increased use of Public relations today. **[10marks]**
- b) In the study of public relations you have already noted different professions coming up with their own codes of conduct to act as guidelines for ethical behaviour. Explain why most corporations have since adopted such a move to establish corporate codes of conduct. **[10marks]**

**QUESTION 3**

**“A public relations practitioner is a lawyer.”** Discuss this statement giving practical advice to Public relations practitioners on what they need to do if they have to work with the lawyers. **[20 marks]**

**QUESTION 4**

Prior to granting the media interview, it is beneficial to enquire from the reporter the type of information required from you so that you are confidently prepared. What process would you follow to get the best results from the media interview? [20marks]

**QUESTION 5**

The primary task of government public relations practitioners is to inform the public, but while performing this role, they are faced with a number of obstacles. Discuss these obstacles and further explain the activities of a lobbyist. [20 marks]

**QUESTION 6**

Discuss the activities in **an employee** communication strategic programme and the specific communications tools used to reach employees. [20marks]