

**DEVELOPMENT OF  
PR IN KAZAKHSTAN  
AND POSSIBILITIES OF  
PERIODIZATION**

*«One step of a hundred people is better than  
a hundred steps of one person».*

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Despite a pretty considerable period of existence of «public relations» on information and commercial space of the Post-Soviet republics, of course, not comparable with its history in the same western countries, especially North America, where it came to us from, by the way, considering those ideological changes which forced to cease perceiving it only as a method of «bourgeois making a fool and befuddling of masses' consciousness», occurred long-awaited understanding by domestic business and public structures of its strategic importance, but as it appeared, our respectable public still have pretty superficial and vague ideas of essence and means of PR. And what is especially important, that not only representatives of small or medium business differ with such «understanding», but it is quite often met among representatives of large business as well, and also it is still widespread among many employees of reputable state structures. If to consider a contribution of mass media and the cinema industry to promoting and progress of this sphere, it would be possible to assume that commercial and mass audience would already have to have a clear view sufficiently of the essence of this phenomenon, however... Still in the use of representation, for example, that PR is advertising, or that the main appointment for public relations services is mailing of press releases. As a result, all this leads to quite sensitive «trials» with adjacent divisions and organization structures which by all means will not fail to specify that the field of the PR worker activity should not go beyond that office framework which they imagine themselves or as exclusively «press secretary service», or at best «department of advertising development». But there are some positive motions in this case, banal enough, connected with invasion of the social networks and technologies of the Internet into our life which demanded, in its turn, more effective creation of feedback with clients and formations of active communications in activity of all companies. The management seems to start understanding that this new sphere is included somehow into part of progression work, but by inertia continues to

trust Internet progression, not only in terms of technical registration, but also filling with the content, now to representatives of IT services.

Such confusion is caused first of all, that even in the scientific sphere of the standard and recognized by all players, by absence of «framework» in definition of functional duties and purposes of PR. All of us realize that fact well, that even in comparison with journalism in which despite the proceeding long-term disputes, nevertheless there are 3-4 all-recognized definitions, and public relations have not been given a preference of any of more than 500 formulations yet! Behind each of which, by the way, there is a certain, distinctive from others and not indisputable vision, and even sometimes the whole school/1/. It is impossible to say that it is unambiguously bad as the specialty of PR is at the initial stages of development, and in disputes as we know, the truth is born.

But nevertheless, if disputes proceed even in the academic environment, what, it is asked, to expect from direct players at places? Those who owing to their official position, personal ideas about PR (as we told, sometimes very and very approximate) and the experience acquired somehow, and, above all, an access to distribution of precious administrative and technical resources, try to outline this functional and target framework by their view and mind. As a result, you will quite often see that the activity of this irreplaceable «specialist in public relations» is limited by someone just purely «secretarial» powers, with the only plus – addition to the name of the position of addition in the form of a prefix «press ...» or «public relations».

At once we will make a reservation that fortunately, such representations were, are and will be widespread not everywhere. First, since the moment of a turn of our economy and system to market mechanisms of regulation, the companies, with solid practical and methodological baggage, and also with already fulfilled technologies of influence started entering into our market. Generally these, of course, were firms with presence of the foreign capital, at first a joint venture, then private companies. Though originally, the part of these PR technologies was presented to us in the form of a set of unusual receptions, in addition with a big share of overseas color and exotic, but nevertheless, by these examples, domestic advertising and PR started studying real rules of the game. It is important that these companies from the very beginning knew how to build effective communication strategy, without jumping aside in search of «place» and «face», and training on the course its new «apprentice». Among those

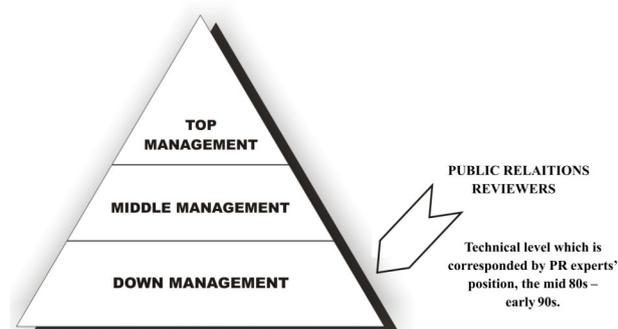
appeared ones, for example, the companies as Coca-Cola Bottlers, Nestle, Procter & Gamble, Philippe Maurice Kazakhstan, etc.

Entry of public relations technologies into our market and its «understanding» by domestic audience came not at once, but it was as *wavy*. The first, as it was specified, an impulse, like an initial throw into water, were given by these companies, with rich acquired experience. From them inertial waves went to the domestic companies: or with existence of the solid capital (for example, Basis A, Raimbek Bottlers, etc.), or with an appearance abroad, situation itself obliged to look for their contacts and recognition at foreign partners (Karachaganak Petroleum Operating, etc.). The same list can include the first advertising companies of Kazakhstan (The Renaissance, etc.) where many «PR trainees» of the first wave went to work. Though, it is considered that historically the first advertising organization in Kazakhstan was, based in 1951, «Advertising and the trade equipment» which was renamed as «Kaztorgreklama» subsequently, at first being a part of «Soyuztorgreklama» All-Union association, and in 1981 renewed as «Kaztorgreklama», but already in the status of republican submission /2/. However, by more thorough examination we can find out that personnel training for that «advertising» was conducted only on the «Production and Registration» line (now it would be called as Outdoor advertising), and similar training centers settled down mostly at technical schools of consumer cooperation. There was a sphere of Promotion and Propaganda which had more ideological character. Personnel preparation for creation of effective external and intra corporate communications for the enterprises was practically absent and the sense in that is like was not, during the planned and distributive economy existing then. Perhaps it is that has an explanation of that creative poverty and scarcity of our advertising banners and rollers of that time. However, this situation created conditions at which emergence of new sphere of activity was apprehended in wonder, and caused wide genuine interest.

Such supervisions also allowed us to make some chronology, a periodization of emergence, distribution and introduction of the sphere of public relations in the domestic market. Once again we pay attention to lack of claims for any completeness or a generality of the drawn conclusions. Another reservation concerns that the made supervisions belong only to the practical sphere of PR, affecting research activity a little, though here, for example, a few problems with methodological and methodical support somewhere had similar moments. And the main scientific

and methodical researches in the sphere were carried out in the beginning exactly abroad. Besides, the process of entry into «PR understanding» cannot be considered identical to all its participants, some subjects still for a number of reasons remain at primary stage of its understanding.

Presumably and very carefully we took *the mid 80s* for a reference point of the domestic chronicle of practical PR.

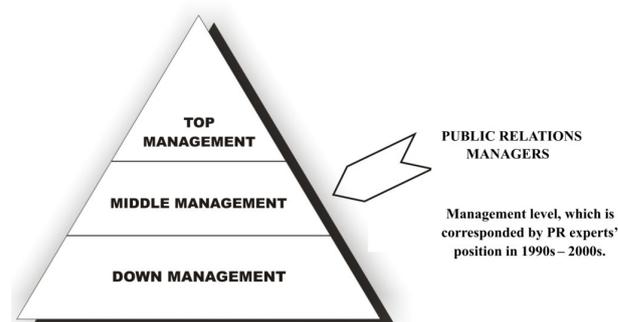


At this time in our and in all Soviet, and then Post-Soviet republics, there openly started talking about PR and came awareness of value of the correct adjustment and support of mutually beneficial relations with the public. We do not say that there had not been carried out researches in this area in the USSR and in a socialist camp, but, mostly, they concerned promotion, and had a strong ideological slant (Wojtasik L., etc. – /3/). An exception, perhaps, were works, like the book of a professor Pheophanov O. A. «USA: advertising and society» /4 / where an outstanding journalist-foreign affairs specialist tried to look at the essence and nature of advertising phenomenon from a new angle, but because of a country-specific orientation of such works, they did not provide our enterprises with rather real tools, receiving an exit to abroad or domestic market. Besides, the majority of similar researches had more fundamental, research character and were also poorly suitable in practical application for a set of organizations (except for ideological).

The end of this period – *early 90s*, like the end of «interlunation» when, as well as in the academic environment, and in the sphere of business and industry, more or less clear idea of value of the correct communications in the external and internal environment of interaction starts being approved. A distinctive feature of this time is an emergence of numerous courses on training in bases of PR and advertising.

However, what is this period especially significant for us with? First, those organizations, and

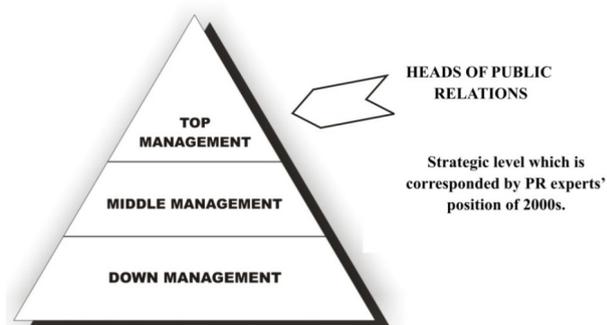
originally it is cooperatives, then private enterprises and a large sector which on the wave of fashion or real desire, had changes in their activity, there were opened new staffing positions – «press secretaries» or «public relations reviewers». Separate divisions on communications as it was noted earlier, existed only in the companies with acquired foreign experience. In the majority of firms it is only a certain regular person whose duties included exactly building relations with mass media. Quite often, in an office rank these experts are equated to secretaries, i.e. responsible for external correspondence and preparation of media content. Influence on formation externally and intra corporate image has not been realized by the majority yet. It would be possible to call figuratively this period – «*the time of public relations reviewers*», from a component of the Latin word *referentis* as «reproducing, reporting», i.e. it was the level of lower, performing management. Other features: absence and lack of methodical development, initial and vague ideas of activity field, weak practical experience.



The second period – the end of 90s – 2000s is the time of awareness of real value of correctly debugged public relations for the safe present and future of a firm or organization. During this period PR experts are already frequent in commercial structures, they are of a mid-level, they are already called public relations *managers*, indirectly assuming that they are engaged in «public opinion management» (if to consider the root of the word «management»). In large, as it was, in more advanced organizations, there are separate divisions, whole departments of public relations adjustment. Respectively, there are also heads of PR departments who are entrusted the duty of formation of the demanded relations with society and clients. During this period the corporate sites become noticeable (mostly the sites-business cards). The main goal is informing more potential consumers, and to try as it is possible to know better the requirements of

audience. Polls of buyers, telephone surveys, polls at the exit are widespread.

It would be possible to call this period formally the time of «*public relations managers*» who are given responsibility for implementation and planning of separate projects. Distinctive feature: emergence of consulting PR firms and numerous trainings, both on creation of effective communications, and in nearby spheres, including as a mutually beneficial way to impart new, favorable acquired experience. There is a tendency of opening PR specialists training offices at universities so as to the market there is coming a long-awaited understanding of insufficiency of separate, uncoordinated knowledge in the sphere of journalism or economy for creation of effective business communications.



*The third period (the 2000s – current)* – is the time when public relations experts appear in boards of directors, take positions of deputy directors and presidents of various levels. There are frequent positions of *heads* on public relations, heads on strategic communications, heads on work with clients, etc., in submission of which there appear at once several departments. The main feature is the understanding of a strategic importance of PR; public relations experts make or participate in formation of plans of companies' future development, responsible for an exit from crisis situations, do the analysis and perspective business plans. Managers from PR participate and organize negotiations with major clients, prepare base for company business connections. This is the time when PR experts are already ranked as the **top management**.

Asel Karaulova, the President of Kazakhstan Press Club, on this occasion once said «A status of PR managers in companies is growing up. At the same time, actively developing the so-called humanitarian technologies: create charitable funds, actively growing a theme of social responsibility of business. In 9% of the companies, these functions are performed

already by directors of marketing, managing directors or managers of development» [5].

The main distinctive feature of this period is the approach of the end of «journalists' era» in structures of public relations. During employment, there is already required a separate diploma about the completion of education with specialization in the sphere of public relations assuming as existence of knowledge of basic principles of work with mass communications, and bases of marketing and psychology of work with the client. In its turn, there are cases when PR specialists are given responsibility for general marketing. In the environment the media has an understanding that the press from the concept of mass media gradually has to pass to the concept of Quality Management System. During this period there are especially popular new, «nonconventional» methods of public relations: actions of promotion, flashmobs, direct-mail, formation of client communities, additional service offers ... The purpose becomes more increasing to hold the consumer, to overpersuade in decision-making, to influence upon invisible threads of its consciousness and subconsciousness. «After 2003,» – according to the Asel Karaulova – «in Kazakhstan for the first time began to develop the market of financial communications, which was closed and did not clear up to this time» / 5 /. It is significant – emergence and mass application of social networks, sites traps, especially valuable and demanded are SEO managers, and at least initial knowledge of SMM management from PR expert is already demanded.

Of course, this «chronology» does not apply for complete coverage of a question, and moreover, is based on personal observations only of the part of domestic, Kazakhstani market. Especially, as it was stated above, the process was never even and progressing. So, if the state of the majority of the companies of the southern capital also falls under such description, then the regions can be more often described with characteristics of the second and even third period. And Almaty management also differs as well as the level of the preparation, and the level of being kept informed of the problem. In the environment of city business it is possible to meet the companies which moved to the strategic PR level, at the same time peacefully adjoining to firms where PR experts are still limited to secretarial «powers», i.e. the first level. As if coming back to initial supervision anew, we compel to claim that the considerable part of managers and managers of various levels, of course, mostly it is the level of small and medium business, but there

are also other examples, possess very and very superficial knowledge about PR, reaching in their current activity up to primitive experimenting and copying.

Today the situation with activity in public relations has changed a little, and the reason for that is the same notorious crisis. Heads are compelled to cut down expenses, and PR staff also falls under «economy». As a result, at best, specialists in public relations are given additional, inappropriate to their profile, a duty, in the worst – obligations for public relations are shifted to officials as it was specified, having very approximate, frequent even foggy ideas about this sphere (for example, people having at least the approximate knowledge in the field of Internetsurfing become responsible for site contents and social networks). However, the same last ones consider (of course under the influence of the same fashionable trends thrown from mass media and cinema) that they possess all necessary for effective and effective execution of this role. It is good if the management perceives it quite so, and speci-

fied ones really possess natural data for this purpose. And what is if not ...

One of those 500 definitions of public relations is the concept of PR as «strategic communications». Not only reputation, image of the company depends on the correct creation of such communication streams (in that and other direction). The modern market differs with incomparable mobility and variability, a rigid competitive component, requirements of adequate and effective response to calls than before. In such understanding public relations already appears to us as strategy and tactics of professional analysis, guessing and response to external influences of the environment. The main indicator and the main means of work in such environment are communication and information streams (which in its turn also change day by day). And the success of creation of all effective business atmospheres, providing conditions and opportunities for the present and future of the company, whether it is a firm or a state institution depends on formation accuracy already of these streams.

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