

PR and politics have always been connected since the beginning. Public Relations has played a role in politics since the year 64 BC. 64 BC was the year Marcus Cicero ran for Consul in Rome (Stromback, 2013). Cicero's brother created a strategy brochure on how to campaign and win over the public. This campaign compared to the technology and data oriented presidential campaigns of Barack Obama, show that political PR has come a long way. PR today plays an active role in the election process, but Public Relations is also used by officials already in office to shape policy and directly influence the public.

Elections exist at the local, state, and national level. Political PR's primary purpose is to get a candidate elected to office. The candidate must be able to communicate effectively to win. Practitioners can work for the candidate directly as a member of their staff or for a political party the candidate belongs (Diggs-Brown, 2012). PR specialists are retained by major candidates to manage and raise money for election campaigns. The main publics dealt with are voters or constituents, the media, and potential volunteers. The main jobs that deal with these functions are the Campaign Manager, Communications Director, and the Field Director (Campaign Roles and Responsibilities, 2013). The Campaign Manager must manage all aspects of the campaign including responsibility for the message the campaign is sending. The Communications Directors deals directly with interactions with the media.

Many times they will be a key spokesperson for the campaign. The Communications Director will also draft campaign literature, speeches, and advertising copy. Finally, The Field Director manages the grassroots level of the campaign. They organize and recruit volunteers to disperse the campaigns message out to voters.

Government PR is similar in many ways to Political PR, but Government PR is working for officials already elected or appointed in the government. PR helps ensure that democratic government works well through effective communication (Diggs-Brown, 2013). Managing public opinion is a key role for officials in the government, so the message being sent out is very important. Once a candidate takes office, their job becomes to serve the people they reside over. An official must be effective with communications to serve constituents. Many times the people who worked on the campaign team for a candidate continue working for them, in communications roles. They hold positions as Communications Directors or Press Secretaries. Officials in government are also concerned with formulating actual policy and serving constituents. This goal is a different goal than during an election, when practitioners are attempting just to get a candidate elected into office. Once in office, a candidate must begin work on the platform that he ran on. Eventually, Government PR practitioner may have to run re-election campaigns for the officials at the end of terms.

Campaigns and running for office have been a part of our country for hundreds of years. Presidents and presidential candidates have mainly influenced modern political PR. John F. Kennedy created a new political force when running for President. This Political Force was the television. Kennedy realized that the vast majority of households had a television, and realized the potential power of the medium. Kennedy was running for the presidency against Richard Nixon, the sitting Vice President. The Great Debates, as they became known later, created a visual contrast between the two candidates. Millions of Americans tuned into these debates. They saw a man in Kennedy, who came off as confident and attractive. Nixon looked pale and unhealthy to the American people. The American people declared Kennedy the winner because visually he came off as more appealing. These debates brought into question the role of television in the democratic process.

The Vietnam War played an important role in Political and Government PR as well. This war became the first televised war. The brutality shown on television helped fuel anti-war campaigns that mounted all across the country. Eventually, the US removed itself from the war without victory.

Richard Nixon lost to Kennedy, but he would have his impact on Political PR later. Nixon lost two major elections in 1960 and 1962. He restored his image with a campaign strategy that used advertising techniques, PR tactics, and managed the

media. Nixon was elected president in 1969. Commercials that asked him favorable question from supporters helped give the candidate a positive spin. Nixon also changed government PR by creating The White House Office of Communication. This office remains today in the White House, and it manages the message of the administration. "The President receives more media attention than all the federal agencies and Congress Combined"(Cameron, 2008, P.440). This office in the Whitehouse is in charge of all this attention and effectively using it to aid the president in creating policy.

Ronald Regan, a former actor, used his communication skills that he gained from acting to effectively engage the American people. He was seen as always optimistic when speaking with constituents. His communications staff played to the president's strengths and stayed away from his weaknesses. The administration was always on the same page on what message they were sending out, and they avoided difficult questions by providing other interesting stories.

Another major change came to political and government PR in the early 2000s. Politics and elections went digital and moved online. Howard Dean, the former governor of Vermont, ran for president in 2004. Dean created an impressive campaign by using the Internet. Dean used the Internet for fundraising, direct voter contact, and volunteer recruitment. Although Dean lost, he changed political

campaigning forever. Presidential Candidates in 2008 learned from Dean an implemented his strategies. Barack Obama, who won the election, used the Internet to reach young voters, Independents, and working professionals. Barack Obama also raised a lot of funds through the Internet. In total, the 2008 campaign cost a record 5.3 billion dollars. 1.3 billion more than the year before. Obama also correctly used the Internet to disperse his message. These technological changes have changed the field of political and government PR forever (Wilcox, 2010).

Every field carries advantages and disadvantages; Political and Government PR is no different. One advantage in the field is the ability to make a difference in the world. To some this means a lot. Political jobs also hold a certain amount of prestige among people. Another advantage is the opportunity to work with very important and influential people. Some also find value in working for their country. Also, elections and government will always be around, so there is plenty of opportunities always present in the field. Some disadvantages with the field are long hours during elections. Practitioners working with officials or candidates may have to support policies they don't fully agree. Some people would have a hard time doing this, but others may not. You will be required to travel a lot. Some may not like this while others would love it. Another disadvantage is when working in politics and government even on the communications side, you personal life may come under

scrutiny from the media or the opposition. Many people would be very opposed to this, and this would stop them from choosing a career in this field. Another disadvantage is you must adhere to Campaign and campaign financing laws. One major law is the Federal Election Campaign Act, or FECA, which created contribution limits and regulated other aspects of campaigns (A Century of Campaign Finance Law, 2010). Some people would not want to deal with these constraints when dealing with PR.

Practitioners in political or government PR must help candidates or government officials communicate effectively with constituents or citizens. This role involves drafting press releases, holding press conferences, special events, fundraising, and many other common PR activities. There are some differences though. Speeches are a key task for candidates and government officials, so PR practitioners are the ones who draft these the majority of the time (Hamilton, 2009). Political and government PR practitioners have the unique task of getting a candidate elected to the position. This activity takes a different approach than a standard PR campaign, being an advocate for one person is very different than being an advocate for an entire organization. Crisis management is a key activity in political and government PR. Scandals tend to happen in politics.

To gain employment, you must have good analytical, writing, and other communication skills. You do not need a degree in Communication to pursue a career in these fields. It would help though and would provide good practice for the skills you need. Political Science is a popular degree choice for those entering into careers in politics or government. Many people also make the choice to go to Law Schools as well. Most people get their start working on campaigns or in government offices. It is a process of making your way up from the bottom.

The average salary for someone working in the PR field in Government/Public service is \$71,500 (PR Week, 2012). This salary is the second lowest when compared to other industries. The median salary for PR practitioners overall is \$54,170 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Government/Public service practitioners are making more than the median salary for all practitioners. Although low compared to some PR industries, the majority of people choose this field not for the salary, but for the opportunity to serve and improve their country. This sense of duty outweighs salary in importance to many people.

The prospects for the future are good. Jobs can be found at all levels of the government because there are elections at all levels. Every year there are elections around the country for different offices. Also, many government officials need communications staff to relay their message to the public. Practitioners can also choose to work for firms or political parties.

This form of PR holds high interest to me personally. I have always considered a job in politics or government, and communications hold a high interest to me. The opportunity to serve the public and help make lives better has a draw to me. This form of PR is a great opportunity for practitioners to work for something they believe in. I would love to work on the campaigns of candidates that I feel strongly about. A vast number of people in our country are apathetic to government and politics. Government and politics always will be two very interesting subjects. These two subjects will never go away or stop mattering.

Bibliography

- Campaign Roles and Responsibilities. (2013). In Wellstone. Retrieved October 2, 2014, from <http://www.wellstone.org/resources/campaign-roles-and-responsibilities>
- Hamilton, L. (2009, December 28). The Key to Good Politics? Good Communication. *The Center on Congress at Indiana University*. Retrieved from congress.indiana.edu/the-key-good-politics-good-communication
- PR Week. (2012). Salary Survey. *PR Week*. Retrieved from https://blackboard.syr.edu/bbcswebdav/pid-3376011-dt-content-rid-9010032_1/courses/25943.1151/PRWEEKpremiumsalarysurvey2012.pdf
- A Century of U.S. Campaign Finance Law. (2010). In *National Public Radio*. Retrieved October 2, 2014, from www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyid=121293380
- Stromback, J., Kioussis, S. (2013) Political Public Relations: Old Practice, New Theory-Building. *Public Relations Society of America*. Retrieved from www.prsa.org/intelligence/prjournal/documents/2013strombakkiousis.pdf
- Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2014-2015 edition, Public Relation Specialist*, Retrieved October 3, 2014 from <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/public-relations-specialist.htm>
- Wilcox, D. (2010). Government and Politics. In *Think Public Relations* (1st ed., pp. 363-366). Boston: Pearson.
- Cameron, G. (2008). Nonprofit, Education, and Government. In *Public Relations Today* (1st ed., pp. 440-446). Boston: Pearson.
- Diggs-Brown, B. (2012). Historical Perspective, Politics and Government. In *Strategic public Relations An Audience-Focused Approach* (pp. 53-56, 411-425). Boston: Cengage Learning.