Take Home Essay Examination

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Question #2

The Global Leadership Study from The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations discusses the importance of leadership, the top 10 issues in the public relations industry, generational variations, the development of future leaders, gender perspectives, and a model and index on leadership. The Plank Center's mission for leadership in public relations is to "help develop and recognize excellent PR leaders and role models in practice and the classroom, and bridge the gap between education and practice" (The Plank Center, 2016).

There are a few significant and interesting insights from the Global Leadership Study. According to 4,484 professionals, the top three issues in the public relations industry are the speed and volume of information flow (23.1 percent), dealing with crises (11.9 percent), and the digital revolution and rise of social media (15.3 percent). Moreover, the Global Leadership Study has also demonstrated the importance of emotional intelligence in the public relations industry. Traditionally, professionals hire employees based on outstanding educational background, exceptional technical skill-set, and high IQ's; however, "because of deadline-driven environments, misunderstandings via social media and online presence, and overall high-stress levels, understanding emotional intelligence is key to a successful business" (Lukitsch, 2016). According to Griffin (2016), people with high emotional intelligence (EQ's) tend to perform better than others, particularly in positions that entail interpersonal interaction and influencing the work of others.

Overall ratings of leaders and culture are yet another significant insight from the study. Participants were asked to rate the following statements on a scale of 1 (very little extent) to 7 (a great extent): "The highest ranking of PR professional in my organization is an excellent leader," "My organization encourages and practices two-way communication," and "the CEO or top executive in my organization understands the value of PR." Inopportunely for the public relations industry, the first two statements were rated at 4.66 and 4.67 consequently, and the last statement was rated at 5.16. These statistics present the challenges that lie ahead for the profession, especially since younger, lower-level practitioners were most critical (The Plank Center, 2016). These ratings are based upon the fact that "the ideas of the younger generation are often ignored when it comes to the final decision, because a basic understanding of the overall change in the culture of society is still missing" (Kiesenbauer, 2015, p.22).

Regardless, the Global Leadership Study demonstrates generational differences that reveal buoyancy for the industry. Seeing that Millennials are described as entitled, team-oriented, and multitaskers — to name a few, the public relations industry is looking at a promising future. With the rise of social media and fast flow of information, it is evident that the public relations industry will remain steadfast for many years to come — at least until the next technological revolution comes along. Therefore, Millennials, or otherwise "a globally growing population of people who are tired, or even unoriented, with the old public relations tactics" (Norcross, 2018), will inevitably succeed in a fast-paced industry.

It is exciting to see the industry revolutionize. Organizational change is undoubtedly taking place; an increase in emotional management, education of communication knowledge and skills, and reinforcement of shared visions are increasing in demand (Luo & Jiang, 2014). However, shifting from a conventional hierarchal structure to a more circular one poses a few concerns for current industry leaders that prefer using traditional methods. Lee Cockerell (2008), the author of *10 Common Sense Leadership Strategies From a Life at Disney,* believes that "the way we've always done it," may not always be right — and I agree. In his book, *Managing Public Relations: Methods and Tools for Achieving Solid Results,,* Peter Smudde states that "power in public relations is not just a matter of one dimension but, instead, a matter of exercising power in three dimensions; [hierarchical, rhetorical, and social], that coexist and commingle simultaneously" (Smudde, 2015, p. 177). Therefore, implementing the three people skills suggested by the Global Leadership Study; "strengthen change management skills and capabilities, improve the listening skills of professionals, and enhance conflict management skills" (The Plank Center, 2016) is necessary for current and future leaders to adapt to the fast-changing industry.

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Question #3

      The Arthur W. Page Society, "the world's leading professional association for senior public relations and corporate communications executives and educators who seek to enrich and strengthen their profession" ("About the Arthur W. Page Society," 2018), emphasizes seven effective principles that serve the practice of public relations. Out of the seven principles; tell the truth, prove it with action, listen to stakeholders, manage for tomorrow, conduct public relations as if the whole enterprise depends on it, realize an enterprise's true character is expressed by its people, and remain calm, patient and good-humored ("The Page Principles," 2018), this section will focus on the first principle.

      According to the Arthur W. Page Society (2018), it is important to "let the public know what's happening with honest and good intention; provide an ethically accurate picture of the enterprise's character, values, ideals and actions" ("The Page Principles," 2018). The first president of Page Hall of Fame Inductee, Jack Koten, believes that telling the truth is the key to maintaining credibility and persuasiveness; if one does not tell the truth, "you've ruined your credibility and once you lose your credibility it is almost impossible to re-establish it" (Arthur W. Page Society, 2014). In fact, Larry Foster, the first non-AT&T president of Page Hall of Fame Inductee, states that he could not work for a company that does not share the truth because telling the truth is fundamental (Arthur W. Page Society, 2014). Telling the truth, from a personal viewpoint, is one of the basic elements of success for any business. Creating a good reputation places a business above the rest — at least in today's business environment. In any industry, particularly one with communication at heart, trust is an element that shareholders and stakeholders value most. Dishonesty tarnishes a business's reputation, efficiency, and relationships, which leads to overall failure.

      For instance, I currently work as a social media and public relations manager for Paloma Rooftop Amman, a restaurant and bar in Amman, Jordan. The rooftop is located in a somewhat quiet neighborhood, and the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has received several complaints from neighbors regarding loud sound and music. After receiving several fines, the ministry requested that the rooftop temporarily shut down until the installation of panoramic glass doors in the outdoor area takes place. As the social media and public relations manager, I suggested that we send out an apology letter to the public on multiple social media platforms describing the current circumstances. The CEO disagreed, and asked me to send out a letter explaining that the rooftop is currently under maintenance. I made clear to the CEO that

informing our customers of the truth will maintain a healthy reputation and strong relationships with our customers; however, he was insistent on his idea. I posted a short letter on Facebook that stated

Dear guests,

We would like to apologize for any inconvenience that may have occurred the last couple of days regarding reservations. Our rooftop is currently closed for maintenance to provide you with better service and experience. Should there be any changes, we will let you know ASAP. As for now, hang tight!

Our kind regards and sincerest apologies,

Paloma Rooftop Team

A few days later, one of the employees had publicly expressed his feelings towards The Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities on his personal profile, and word of the truth got out. Since then, we have lost many loyal customers.

In her remarks at the 2017 Page Up Annual Business Meeting in Washington D.C., Jill Feldon, the Vice President of Public Relations, Communication and Brand Management at Kaiser Permanente and Page Up Chair, believes that "given this esteemed, experienced group of professionals, I think most of us would advise our organizations' leaders or our clients that in this digital, networked, global world, the truth will come out. So you might as well be transparent, tell the whole truth, and deal with the consequences" ("The Practice of Telling the Truth," 2017). In other words, "tell the truth, or someone will tell it for you" (Klein, 2006).

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Question #4

The Authentic Enterprise study created by The Arthur W. Page Society examines three major driving forces that affect business and institutions in the 21st century; The Digital Network Revolution, Global Integration and Stakeholder Empowerment. "Together, these forces have created a global playing field of unprecedented transparency and radically democratized access to information production, dissemination and consumption" ("The Authentic Enterprise," 2007, p.6). Although all three forces are rapidly affecting the world of corporate communications, this section will focus exclusively on the emergence of a new digital network revolution.

Our society has been experiencing a tremendous digital change in the last decade, and will undoubtedly continue to do so. Channels of communication have been rapidly evolving, and the Internet and information technology are reportedly state-of-the-art. The digital network revolution is "driving a shift in the way people interact with each other and with companies and institutions. It changes the way dialogue occurs; how perceptions are shaped and how relationships are forged" ("The Authentic Enterprise," 2007, p.11). The Global Leadership Study by The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations has identified the speed and volume of information flow, the digital revolution and rise of social media as part of the top three issues in the field (The Plank Center, 2016). However, the industry must deal with the drastic increase in the volume of communication to achieve the greatest outcomes it has to serve. While the digital shift has created new demands on the field, it allows for opportunities to build "exponentially more intelligent distribution network, based on the 'wisdom of crowds.' That is, not only can anyone create any kind of media, but if it is valuable to people, it will be instantaneously spread globally" ("The Authentic Enterprise," 2007, p. 15). Indeed, in today's and age, breaking news travels through social media like a global epidemic before the crack of dawn.

The Digital Network Revolution is changing public relations in numerous ways. Technological and communication advancements have affected the way people communicate, as well as how, when, where, and who. Seeing that "public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics" ("All About PR," 2012), identifying changes in communication is key to understanding the effects of the digital revolution in public relations. In light of the speedy, unparalleled development of online communication, blogs, social media and websites are replacing

press, radio and television. The production of press releases and press conferences are decreasing. Through traditional public relations, practitioners were able to control messages, segment communications carefully and own control over the channels of communications ("The Authentic Enterprise," 2017). Now, public relations practitioners see an opportunity to develop networks of relationships by steering the growth of social networks and understanding the skills of relationship-building and cooperative influence, which aid in responding to threats and seizing opportunities ("The Authentic Enterprise," 2007). Although the digital network revolution has its benefits, it is not all advantageous for public relations practitioners.

"New [information and communication technologies] solutions are forcing PR specialists to continue to improve their competencies and to keep abreast with new trends and changes on the market since it is true that our knowledge of the Internet today may become outdated tomorrow before we even begin to understand the new rules" (Tworzydlo, 2013, p. 6). Thus, public relations practitioners are expected to stay online all the time. Moreover, The Global Leadership Study has identified dealing with crises as part of the top 10 issues in the field (The Plank Center, 2016). This, according to Kettmann (2013), is due to the fact that crises born on social media are increasingly blindsiding public relations practitioners. For example, in 2017, Uber's former CEO, Travis Kalanick, was caught on tape yelling at one of his drivers for complaining about lowering the prices, which has been shared with the media. In no time, "Uber's future has been thrown into doubt. Hundreds of thousands of customers deleted their accounts in protest of Kalanick's ties to the Trump administration" (Hawkins, 2017).

Emphasizing the fact that the digital network revolution is here to stay, it is essential for schools of communication to administer classes that solely focus on digital public relations, in addition to those that emphasize traditional public relations. The demands of the industry are rapidly expanding, and so should the education of public relations. Public relations students and new-entry practitioners must understand that the industry works with new audiences, new channels and new kinds of content. "Communication channels are proliferating in number and nature. They are changing thanks to shifts in technology, costs, access and usage" ("The Authentic Enterprise," 2017, p. 21). From a personal standpoint, the public relations industry has a bright future. However, without learning to cope with the digital revolution and rise of social media, young practitioners and students, including myself, will not bring to the field the best practices of public relations.

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Question #6

The Public Relations Society of America, PRSA (www.prsa.org), and The Arthur W. Page Society (www.page.org) are two associations that serve to improve the public relations industry by offering relevant rules, guidelines, strategies, case studies, events, awards and opportunities for the field. Each association has a mission statement that keeps the industry at heart. The associations are intended to help and support all public relations practitioners and professionals at all levels, regardless of where they operate.

The Public Relations Society of America is the country's largest professional communications organization. Its mission is to "make communications professionals smarter, better prepared and more connected through all stages of their career" ("About PRSA," 2018). The society is an independent charity that represents more than 30,000 communications professionals nationwide and focuses on today's generation of students and practitioners to guarantee a more diverse PR future. Hypothetically speaking, my colleagues and I will benefit from PRSA in numerous ways. For those interested in expanding their opportunities for the industry, PRSA offers a membership feature that, according to Mark McClennan, PRSA chair and senior vice president of MSLGroup, "has been amazingly rewarding. You get so much more out of it than you put into it, but even more importantly though, you get a chance to give back to the profession, and to the students who are going to be the future of the profession" (PRSA National, 2015).

PRSA's website promotes the importance of diversity and ethics in the industry. It does this by offering a profusion of resources such as case studies, ethical guidelines and blogs. Another element that we might find value in is PRSA's resource library, which provides a variety of public relations and communications resources like a list of firms, requests for proposals, articles and more ("Resource Library," 2018). In getting involved with PRSA, practitioners have the opportunity to win awards that "honor outstanding contributions to the public relations profession" ("Awards," 2018), which will help them earn recognition in the field and its history. Additionally, PRSA offers career-development ideas, tools and training including webinars, certifications, thought leadership, publications and conferences.

Another website that will undoubtedly guide my colleagues is The Arthur W. Page Society (page.org). Unlike PRSA, which is a nationwide professional organization, the Page Society is the world's foremost professional association for senior PR executives and educators who work toward enhancing and reinforcing the profession. The Page Society's mission is "to strengthen the enterprise leadership role of the chief

communications officer by embracing the highest professional standards, advancing the way communications is understood, practiced and taught, and providing a collegial and dynamic learning environment" ("Mission, Vision, & Philosophy," 2018). Similar to PRSA, the Page Society offers a membership feature; however, it consists only of chief communication officers of Fortune 500 corporations and leading non-profit organizations, the CEO's of leading PR agencies, and educators from the business and communication schools ("About the Arthur W. Page Society," 2018).

Before delving into what the Page Society has to offer, it is important to note that "The Page Society and its guiding set of principles are named in honor of Arthur W. Page, who served as vice president of public relations for the American Telephone and Telegraph Company from 1927 to 1946" ("Historical Perspective," 2018). With regards to its mission, founders of the Page Society have outlined a list of seven principles that guide professionals towards the effective practices of public relations: tell the truth; prove it with action; listen to stakeholders; manage for tomorrow; conduct public relations as if the whole enterprise depends on it; realize and enterprise's true character is expressed by its people; and remain calm, patient, and good-humored ("The Page Principles," 2018). Moreover, the Page Society offers award and honor opportunities for those who demonstrate strong leadership in the industry and have strengthened the role of public relations.

We will also find value in the Page Society's news section, which includes recent award winners, elections, partnerships and opportunities that benefit PR professionals ("News," 2018). Some of the opportunities provided by the Page Society include upcoming events hosted by industry leaders that intend to advance the industry's best practices; case study competitions for communication and business students; and a Future Leaders program designed to prepare practitioners for the position of chief communications officer. Additionally, the Page Society dedicates a whole page for thought leadership, which offers reports and materials for the future of public relations, corporate character, trust and reputation, Page model, social and digital, stakeholder engagement and public relations measurement ("Thought Leadership," 2018). From a personal viewpoint, the Thought Leadership section is the most beneficial to my colleagues as it includes up-to-date reports, tools, advice and guidelines.

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