AOHT Hospitality Marketing

Lesson 9

Public Relations

Student Resources

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Student Resource 9.1

Anticipation Guide: Public Relations

Student Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Directions: For each of the statements below, underline “I agree” if you think the statement is accurate or “I disagree” if you disagree with it. Write one reason to explain your guess. Then take notes on what you learn about this topic in the assigned reading on public relations.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The goal of public relations is to generate immediate sales of your product or service. | |
| My guess: | I agree I disagree |
| My reason: |  |
| I learned: |  |
| People believe and trust what they learn through public relations more than what they learn through advertising. | |
| My guess: | I agree I disagree |
| My reason: |  |
| I learned: |  |
| If you send out a news release, the media is required to report on it. | |
| My guess: | I agree I disagree |
| My reason: |  |
| I learned: |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| An international chain of restaurants has to put just as much effort into local public relations as a small family-owned business does. | |
| My guess: | I agree I disagree |
| My reason: |  |
| I learned: |  |
| Your *trading area*—the geographic area in which most of your customers are likely to reside—is based on where your business is located, and it doesn’t change. | |
| My guess: | I agree I disagree |
| My reason: |  |
| I learned: |  |
| A public relations expert’s main job is to write really great news releases. | |
| My guess: | I agree I disagree |
| My reason: |  |
| I learned: |  |
| Donating time, products, or services to charity might make your business look good, but the business doesn't really benefit from it. | |
| My guess: | I agree I disagree |
| My reason: |  |
| I learned: |  |

Student Resource 9.2

Reading: Public Relations

From *Hospitality Marketing* Magazine, December 2014 Issue

*Carina Sanchez and Eric Nakamoto are marketing consultants. In this month’s “Listen In” column, they talk about the importance of public relations. As always, “Listen In” is written so that you, the reader, can listen in on a dialogue between the top minds in the field of hospitality marketing.*

**Carina:** So today’s topic is public relations.

**Eric:** PR is different from other elements of marketing because it isn’t so focused on making an immediate sale. For example, the goal of a commercial or a print ad is to get the customer to buy your product or visit your business now. PR is about giving the customer a positive image of your company so he or she is more likely to buy from you in the future. For example, you might want to get the media to talk about your new product, even before you launch it, so that people are looking for it.

**Carina:** PR needs to be coordinated with the other elements of a marketing campaign. The PR strategy is part of the overall marketing strategy and plays a really key role. I know some experts who say that PR establishes your brand, while advertising promotes your brand. Many brand roll-out plans today begin with contacting analysts and editors who might review your product. Those people may pay attention when your product is new, but some of them will refuse to cover a new attraction if it has already been advertised.

**Eric:** That’s important to remember. Also, the public is more likely to believe a public relations story than an ad. People think that if a newspaper or TV station is doing a story about your business, that story is true and accurate. They will not make that same assumption about advertising, which they know is paid promotion. This is true even though some stories on TV that are presented in a PR format are actually a promotion that has been bought.

**Carina:** In PR, you don’t control the message that comes out about your company. You can send out all the news releases you want, but the media has to choose whether or not to cover you—and how they present you to the general public. Or you could invite someone to review your product and they could write a bad review. In some ways, PR can be risky, but it’s also part of why the public may trust a media story about your company more than your own advertising—they know someone else had to decide to put this information out there.

**Eric:** A really good public relations expert tips the odds of getting a story written based on a news release by having contacts in the media. Public Relations people develop good relationships with writers and editors. A PR person may take people out to lunch and schmooze with them. A news release is much more likely to generate a story if the editor knows the public relations expert who sends it. If the editor does publish an article based on the news release, the public relations expert always sends a thank-you note and probably calls to thank the editor as well. A public relations expert has to be an expert at all kinds of relations!

**Carina:** Public relations really has two components: media relations and community relations. So far, we’ve been talking about media relations—making news and getting the media to talk about your business. If you release a new product or your product wins an award, you might send out a news release. You want the media—the newspapers, magazines, radio, or TV news—to report about you.

**Eric:** The other important element of public relations is community relations—how you interact with your local community. Usually community relations involves philanthropic activities, like donating to a good cause.But whether you’re a small independent business or an international chain, the local community is key.

**Carina:** Absolutely. For a national or international chain, it’s important to develop a strong local identity in addition to the larger brand name. Making personal, lasting connections will keep you in business and make your business grow. Burger King and Holiday Inn are huge multinational corporations; but, just like individual hotels or family restaurants, they try to create a local connection. They want to become “our” Burger King or “our” Holiday Inn. So the owner of the Burger King might sponsor a Little League team and the Holiday Inn might offer a lower price so that local high schools can hold their prom in the ballroom. Now you’ve started to create a personal relationship.

**Eric:** For an independent business, community relations are even more important. If Burger King doesn’t do well in my neighborhood, there are restaurants all over the world that can offset bad earnings here. But if a family-owned restaurant opens in my neighborhood and doesn’t do well, it will probably go out of business. Without a connection to the local community, a small business is very likely to fail.

**Carina:** So let’s talk about how to use public relations to promote your business. Remember, we’re talking public relations, not advertising. First, you need to know what your trading area really is. Take the time to drive for 15 or 20 minutes in various directions and at various times of day. Have someone ride with you and make note of what customers are in this trading area—and keep in mind that it will depend on the time of day.

**Eric:** Right. One of our customers owned a cute little sidewalk café. If you drove north away from the café, you ran into a lot of office buildings. If you drove south, you hit a residential community with a lot of senior citizens. Based on that, we suggested that he think about what he offered and how it corresponded to the local community. He had some good business practices that would appeal to those customers, but nobody really knew about them.

**Carina:** We sent out a news release for him announcing his restaurant’s lunch delivery program, so that local businesses could fax or email their lunch orders and have them delivered to the office. The news radio station in his town picked up the news release and interviewed him as part of a story they were doing on “different ways of doing business in today’s economy.” As a result, his lunch business doubled.

**Eric**: But that’s media relations. He also really used community relations to promote his business. He started looking at local groups that took care of senior citizens. He donated food to a local Meals on Wheels program for senior citizens, and he offered discounts to some of the local church groups and senior citizen centers. That got people in the community talking about his business. As they heard about his early bird dinner special and senior citizens’ discount, he started to get a nice boost to his dinner business as well—all because he knew his local community and was responding to their needs.

**Carina:** Community relations can also be a way to get more media coverage; many companies get media attention because they do philanthropic activities. Giving back to the community is one of the strongest tools we have to build good public relations. It creates goodwill between the business and the local community, and can establish lasting partnerships that will improve your company’s image and bring in new business. It can also be beneficial to your employees, who may live in the local community and are likely to feel prouder of their work if they know it also benefits their hometown.

Student Resource 9.3

Sample: News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**CONTACT:**   
Magdalena O’Connor  
Director of Marketing

The FarmHouse Family Retreat  
Phone: (123) 456-7899  
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magdalena@farmhouse.com  
http://www.farmhousefamilyretreat.com

**Local Residents Get “Baa-ck” to the Farm at Unique Family Resort**Sustainable resort provides sneak peek of family fun in beautiful, natural setting

**Santa Rosa, California, May 7, 2015**— The FarmHouse Family Retreat, a one-of-a-kind, family-friendly, sustainable resort in Santa Rosa, announced today that they will give local residents a sneak peek this Memorial Day weekend (May 23–26) of family fun and green living at their First Annual “Baa-ck to the Farm” Open House. Guests can enjoy a sustainable barbecue with grass-fed beef and free-range chicken, visit the baby lambs in the sheep pen, listen to local bands, and be among the first to get a look at the accommodations.

Guests of all ages are welcome; no admission will be charged, and kids under 10 eat free. Sunday afternoon features an Extreme Frisbee competition for teenagers, and face painting and water balloon fights will be available for younger visitors. Tours will be offered at 10 a.m., and 12, 2, 4, and 6 p.m. daily, offering guests a chance to learn about the FarmHouse’s LEED certified accommodations and sustainable living tips. The barbecue will be served every day starting at 5 p.m., with different local bands playing each night.

The FarmHouse Family Retreat will open for business starting September 1, 2015. This sustainable resort will offer suites and private cottages suitable for families and guests of all ages. The retreat supports sustainable practices, such as living off the land by serving organic fruits and vegetables grown on the property, and it offers family-friendly activities to teach students about green living and life on the farm.

For additional information on the new FarmHouse Family Retreat, contact Magdalena O’Connor, Director of Marketing, at (123) 456-7899, or visit <http://www.farmhousefamilyretreat.com>.

**ABOUT FARMHOUSE RETREAT, INC.** — FarmHouse Retreat, Inc., celebrates the natural beauty and history of Northern California by offering family-friendly activities that promote local agriculture and tourism. Promoting sustainable and green practices, such as living off the land, composting, and recycling, as well as family fun and entertainment in nature, FarmHouse Retreat is poised to be a leader in the sustainable resort industry.

**- END -**

Student Resource 9.4

Assignment: News Release

Student Name: Date:

Directions: Use the information below to help you write a news release announcing something about your project attraction. Remember to look at Student Resource 9.3 to help you. Before you begin, read through all of the instructions on this resource, and read the assessment criteria at the end to make sure you understand how your work will be assessed.

What Is a News Release?

A news release is a written communication that reports on an event or other newsworthy information about a product or a company. The release is distributed to the news media for the purpose of promoting a product or a business and encouraging the media to write a story about the announcement.

Why Should People Pay Attention to Your News Release?

You can write a news release about almost anything. But the question is, will anyone care? The goal of a news release is to inform the news (newspaper, magazine, radio, or television reporters) about something connected to your business, in the hope that the news will decide to do a story that will make your business look good or that will get people to patronize your business or buy your product.

So when you’re writing a news release, you need to think about an angle—a reason for people to care about your story. In the example news release (Student Resource 9.3), you’ll notice that the news release is promoting an open house event to attract people to the resort. That is one angle, or one reason why a media outlet might report on this information. The news release also emphasizes the kid-friendly activities, which is another angle, since parents are frequently looking for things to do with their kids. The sustainable, LEED-certified elements of the resort are yet another angle. In this one short news release there are three different reasons to care about this story.

Why should people pay attention to your news release? What reasons to care about your project attraction can you provide? Write your thoughts here:

How Do You Write a News Release?

**First, write the headline.** The headline should be brief, clear, and to the point. Think of how to say what you want to announce in the fewest words possible (while still making sense). Ideally, your headline should be catchy—that is, something that is intriguing, funny, or fun.

Example News Release Headlines:

* More for the Mouse House: Disney Theme Parks to Add New Ride
* A Healthy Hamburger? Jumbo Burger’s New Menu Makes It Happen
* Generation Y Sets Sail on Royal Caribbean’s Newest Ocean Liner

You may also want to include a tagline that explains more of the details of your announcement. If you look at the sample news release, the headline is “Local Residents Get ‘Baa-ck’ to the Farm…” and the tagline is “Sustainable resort provides sneak peek….”

**Once you have written the headline, you need to include the date and location** from which the information is being announced. **Then write the lead.** Your news release should start with an opening sentence that includes the most important information—who, what, when, where, why, and how. In addition, the lead should grab the reader’s attention in some way. Write one or two more sentences that add some more important details or include the details you couldn’t fit in your first sentence. Look at the example below.

Example Lead:

New York, NY, January 2, 2014 — At its shareholders meeting today, XYZ Hotels, Incorporated, previewed a new advertising campaign announcing the launch of its “Generation Next” hotel, which targets consumers in the 18- to 29-year-old demographic.

At its shareholders meeting today, XYZ Hotels, Incorporated,

Where When Who

previewed a new advertising campaign announcing the launch of its “Generation Next” hotel,

How What

which targets consumers in the 18- to 29-year-old demographic.

Why

**Finally, write the rest** of the news release. Stick to the important facts and don’t make it too long. Think about these questions when you’re writing it:

* What is the actual news? Why is this news? Why should people care or be interested?
* What details do people need to know? What people, places, times, or dates are important?
* What is your purpose in sharing this news? (For example, your news might be that your company has a new CEO, but the purpose behind announcing that might be to let potential customers know that your company is changing direction or to let your investors know that you have a new person in charge to keep the company from going bankrupt.)
* Who or what is the source of the news? What do people need to know about that person or company? This is the About section at the end of the release.

Now that you know what a good news release looks like, create a news release about your project attraction.

Make sure your assignment meets or exceeds the following assessment criteria:

* The news release offers a clear angle that makes the story newsworthy.
* The lead conveys all the important information in two or three sentences and grabs the reader’s attention.
* The news release makes the attraction sound good without resorting to a sales pitch.
* The news release follows the proper format and includes all of the components of a professional news release.
* The news release is neat and uses correct grammar and spelling.