

Making public relations a true profession in Malaysia by an act of parliament: an advocacy

Abstract

The practice of public relations is becoming more sophisticated than ever with increasing areas of specialisations and functions. However, the tasks of public relations practitioners are perceived to range from the positive to negative. Sadly, more are now leaning towards the later. Unethical practices like spinning; astroturfing; fronting; and language managing are alleged to be increasing. Even the names or labels for public relations have become more varied than ever. It can range from public affairs, corporate affairs, perception management, to spin doctoring. To date, no one universal definitions of public relations exist. Every public relations professional body have their own definitions and so do public relations practitioners. This probably reflects the diversity of public relations practices and the environment it is operating. Despite the rapid growth of the public relations practice and its education and training globally its status as a true profession remains questionable. In Malaysia, the Institute of Public Relations Malaysia (IPRM) tries to overcome this issue by lobbying for a Public Relations Profession Act. This article attempts to explain the reasons why IPRM feels the need for the act, benefits of the act, actions taken to realise it, reaction of the government towards this effort, response by IPRM members and non-members, research conducted on public relations practitioners view of the propose act, overcoming fears/oppositions, some relevant points in the act, etc. This paper is written from the writer's involvement in trying to promote public relations as a true profession and also being a public relations educator for over 30 years. Thus, the research methodology is mainly the participatory approach, and basically advocacy in nature. The practice of public relations is becoming more sophisticated than ever with increasing areas of specialisations and functions. However, the tasks of public relations practitioners are perceived to range from the positive to negative. Sadly, more are now leaning towards the later. Unethical practices like spinning; astroturfing; fronting; and language managing are alleged to be increasing. Even the names or labels for public relations have become more varied than ever. It can range from public affairs, corporate affairs, perception management, to spin doctoring. To date, no one universal definitions of public relations exist. Every public relations professional body have their own definitions and so do public relations practitioners. This probably reflects the diversity of public relations practices and the environment it is operating. Despite the rapid growth of the public relations practice and its education and training

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