

Chapter 12

Public Relations and Framing the Message

We Can Do It!



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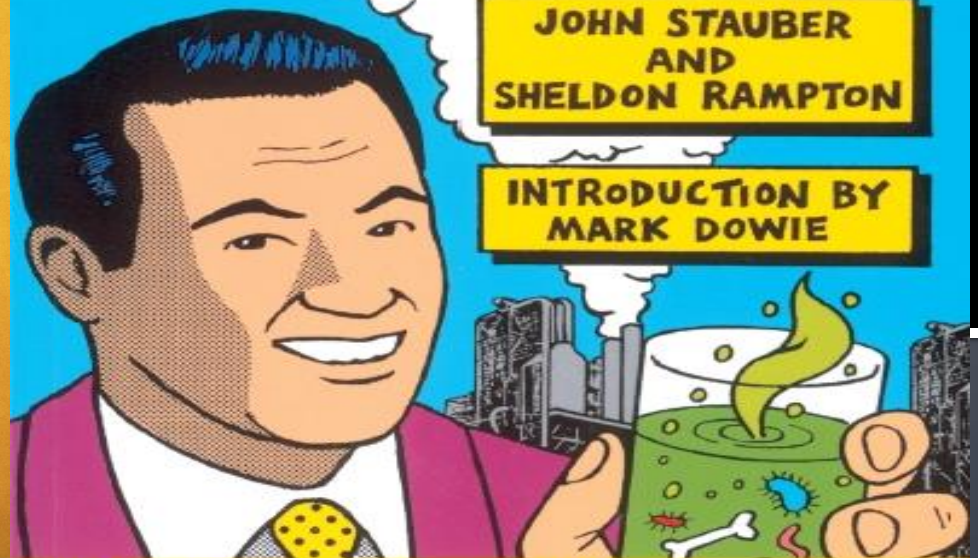
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LIES, DAMN LIES AND THE PUBLIC RELATIONS INDUSTRY

JOHN STAUBER AND SHELDON RAMPTON

INTRODUCTION BY MARK DOWIE



"Terrific! Don't miss it."

—Molly Ivins

Propaganda

- **Propaganda** is a specific type of message presentation, aimed at serving an agenda. Even if the message conveys true information, it may be [partisan](#) and fail to paint a complete picture. The book *Propaganda And Persuasion* defines propaganda as **"the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist."**
- Communication strategically placed, either as advertising or as publicity, to gain support for a special issue, program, or policy is known as **propaganda**

Framing

- (Framing Theory), the media also play an important role in framing public issues and events by making certain aspects more salient than others while putting a specific news angle or “spin” on these elements
- “the central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events.”

Framing Rooted In The “domestication” of news

- **Translating the news for the local audience and framing it in ways targeted to the given culture.**
 - **by using different actors,**
 - **different themes,**
 - **different communication strategies.**

Public Relations

- Public relations refers to the total communication strategy conducted by a person, a government, or an organization attempting to reach and persuade an audience to **adopt a point of view**.

Media in the “Big Picture”

- The media are, by default, influenced by the political, economic, and social constraints of the broader systems in which they exist...
- (They) actively serve the “national interest,” as determined by other, more powerful actors and institutions.

Public Relations & Publicity

- Publicity is one type of PR communication: messages that spread information about a person, corporation, issue, or policy in various media. Public relations today, however, involves many communication strategies besides publicity.
- *Because it involves multiple forms of communication, public relations is difficult to define precisely.*
- It covers a wide array of actions, such as shaping the image of a politician or celebrity, repairing the image of a major corporation, establishing two-way communication between consumers and companies, and molding wartime propaganda.
- Broadly defined, *public relations* refers to the entire range of efforts by an individual, an agency, or any organization attempting to reach or persuade audiences.

Early Developments in Public Relations

- The first PR practitioners were simply theatrical press agents: those who sought to advance a client's image through media exposure, primarily via stunts staged for newspapers.
 - For instance, press agents were used by people like Daniel Boone, who engineered various land-grab and real estate ventures, and Davy Crockett, who in addition to heroic exploits was also involved in the massacre of Native Americans.
- As the promotional agendas of many companies escalated in the late 1800s, a number of reporters and muckraking journalists began investigating these practices.
- By the early 1900s, with an informed citizenry paying more attention, it became more difficult for large firms to fool the press and mislead the public.

P.T. Barnum and Buffalo Bill

- P.T. Barnum
 - Used gross exaggeration, wild stories, and staged events to secure newspaper coverage for clients
- William F. Cody (Buffalo Bill)
 - Hired press agents who used a wide variety of media channels
 - Shaped many lasting myths about rugged American individualism
 - Among the first to use publicity



Big Business and Press Agents

- Press agents in the 1800s
 - Hired by large industrial companies
 - Used by rail companies to gain government support
 - Utility companies also used PR strategies to derail competition and eventually attain monopoly status.
 - Used bribes and fraud to garner support and eliminate competition

The Birth of Modern Public Relations

- Public relations developed in the early part of the twentieth century as a profession which responded to, and helped shape, the public, newly defined as irrational, not reasoning; spectatorial, not participant; consuming, not productive.
- **Ivy Ledbetter Lee**
 - Understood the importance of public sentiment
 - Believed that facts were elusive and malleable, begging to be forged and shaped

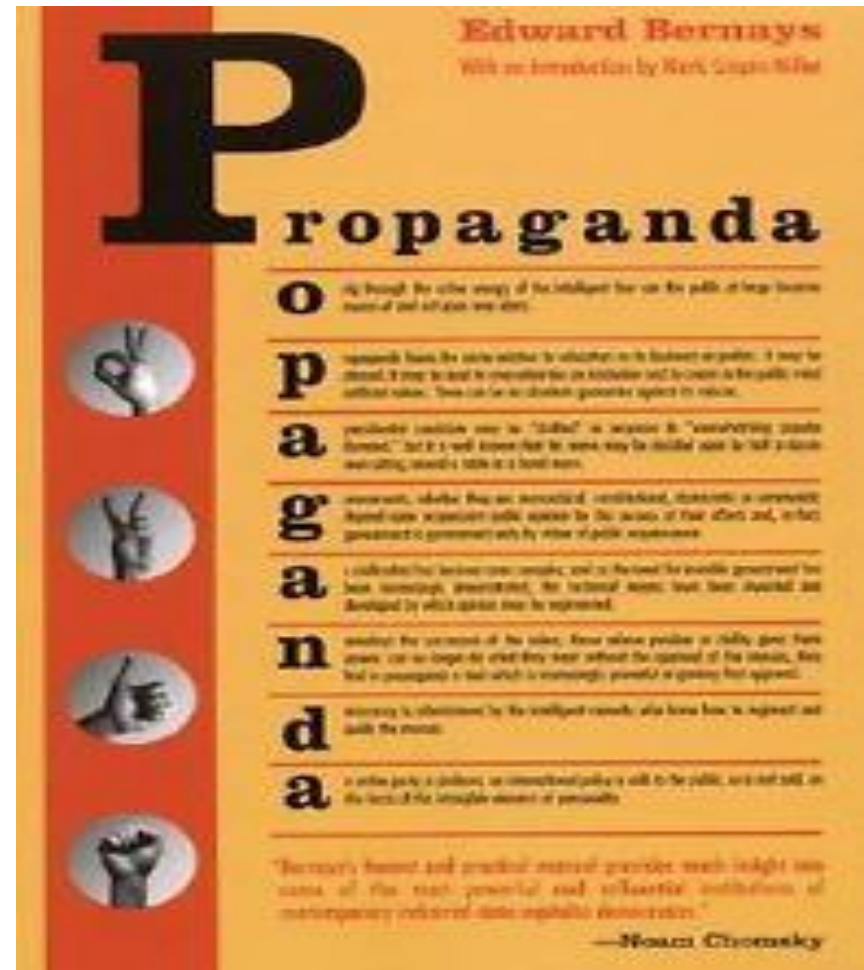


“Since crowds do not reason, they can only be organized and stimulated through symbols and phrases.”

–Ivy Lee, 1917

Edward Bernays

- First to apply findings of psychology and sociology to PR
- Taught the first PR class



Edward Bernays

- **Edward Bernays**
 - The nephew of Sigmund Freud, former reporter Edward Bernays inherited the public relations mantle from Ivy Lee and dressed it up with modern social science.
- For many years, his definition of PR was a standard:
- **“Public relations is the attempt, by information, persuasion, and adjustment, to engineer public support for an activity, cause, movement, or institution.”**
- **Through much of his writing, Bernays suggested that emerging forms of social democracy threatened the established hierarchical order.**
- **He thought it was important for experts and leaders to keep business and society pointed in the right direction:**
- **“The duty of the higher strata of society—the cultivated, the learned, the expert, the intellectual—is therefore clear. They must inject moral and spiritual motives into public opinion.”**

Edward Bernays on Propaganda and Public Relations

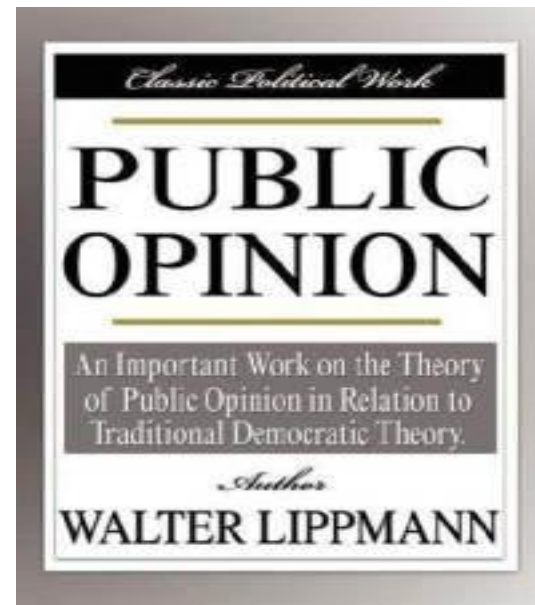


The Modern Public Relations Agent



Walter Lippmann, the newspaper columnist who wrote *Public Opinion* in 1922, also believed in the importance of an expert class to direct the more irrational twists and turns of public opinion.

But he saw the development of public relations as “a clear sign that the facts of modern life [did] not spontaneously take a shape in which they can be known.”



Performing Public Relations (cont.)

- Media relations
 - Secure publicity to promote clients
 - Act as the point of contact during crises
 - Recommend advertising to clients when it seems appropriate
- Special events
 - Raise a client's profile
 - Pseudo-event
 - Created solely to gain media coverage



Performing Public Relations (cont.)

- Community relations
 - PR firms encourage companies to participate in community activities.
- Consumer relations
 - Companies are encouraged to
 - Pay more attention to customers
 - Establish product service and safety guarantees
 - Ensure that all calls and mail from customers are answered promptly

Performing Public Relations (cont.)

- Government relations
 - Work to prevent burdensome government regulation
 - Lobbying
 - Attempting to influence lawmakers to support and vote for an organization's or industry's best interests
 - Astroturf lobbying
 - Phony grassroots public-affairs campaigns engineered by PR firms

Press Release

- A **press release, news release, media release, press statement** or **video release** is a written or recorded communication directed at members of the news media for the purpose of announcing something seemingly newsworthy.
- A press release provides reporters with an [information subsidy](#) containing the basics needed to develop a news story.
- Press releases can announce a range of news items, such as scheduled events, personal promotions, awards, new products and services, sales and other financial data, accomplishments, etc

Video News Releases (VNR's)

- A **video news release (VNR)** is a [video](#) segment made to look like a news report, but is instead created by a [PR](#) firm, advertising agency, marketing firm, [corporation](#), or [government agency](#).
- They are provided to television newsrooms to shape [public opinion](#), promote commercial products and services, [publicize](#) individuals, or support other interests.

Video News Releases (VNR's)



PR Campaigns



PR Campaigns

