

PERSONAL COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

How to position people effectively

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Key words: Personalization, Personal Branding, Personal Marketing, Personal Public Relations, Personal Coaching, Positioning of Individuals, CEO Positioning, Reputation Management, Impression Management

Abstract

This paper deals with a branch of public relations which is enjoying great popularity at present: personal communication management, a new approach to PR and one which issues new challenges to theory and practice. Somewhat surprisingly, personal communication management or personality PR is still a very marginal topic: neither the academic world nor professional associations tend to pay much attention to it although the market is booming and business with vanity is thriving. Alongside classic PR advice, more and more agencies and consultants are offering their clients personal coaching: interview and presentation techniques, image and brand creation, CEO positioning. Numerous 'how to' books provide tips on marketing/promoting/branding yourself. The media are starting to include more personal details in their reporting: portraits of and reports on celebrities from the worlds of politics, business, culture and sports are far more common. The newsworthiness of individuals is growing in importance, both for the media and PR. The popularity of chief executive officers can have a very important effect on the reputation of the companies they work for as well as on share prices and reports in the media. The fact is that personalization is becoming an increasingly important factor in successful organizational and corporate communications. It is about time that personal communication management took on a more central role in PR discussions. This paper will introduce the person-oriented approach to public relations which the author has been developing over the last few years, an approach where individuals are at the centre of attention.

Zitierweise: Tagungsbeitrag bei der Internationalen PR Tagung in Mailand, 16. – 18. Oktober 2008 (www.euprera2008.com). Erscheint in: Tagungsband “Institutionalizing Public Relations and Corporate Communication”, Druck geplant für 2009

1 PRELIMINARY REMARKS FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The phenomenon of personalization and the various ways in which individuals present themselves go back to the very dawn of humanity. People have always used a rich repertoire of techniques, either consciously or unconsciously, so as to leave a lasting (positive) impression on others. In almost every book or paper on the history of PR, personalities from the worlds of politics, religion, art or science are cited as being precursors or pioneers of modern public relations. Specific examples would be philosophers like Aristotle or Plato, political leaders like Julius Caesar or Napoleon, or religious leaders like Jesus, Moses, Buddha or Mohammed. As Grunig & Hunt point out, "political, religious and business leaders have found it necessary to communicate to publics throughout history, and many used tactics quite similar to those used by public relations professionals today" (1984:15).

In an analysis of the history of PR carried out by the author (cf. Nessmann 2000, 2004), concrete case studies (of kings, emperors, statesmen, businessmen, etc.) revealed that over the last 2000 years, famous and influential historical personalities have used numerous methods which would nowadays go under the heading of PR techniques, such as

- deliberately making use of 'fashionable' clothing, hair styles, make up and accessories
- 'showing off' their personal life styles
- basking in other people's limelight and surrounding themselves with VIPs (BIRGing, boosting)
- having coins minted with their likeness on them
- creating their family's own coat of arms
- having their portraits painted (naturally by the great masters of the day)
- staging important social events (weddings, birthdays, moments of personal success)
- attending festivities, as well as making public appearances of any sort
- publishing documents, manifestos, books, memoirs, autobiographies, etc., and,
- with the emergence of the mass media, knowing how to work with journalists.

Looking back in time reveals one more interesting detail: almost all historical personalities who have left a lasting impression after their death had propagandists who spread positive information (stories) about them and who praised the 'boss'. Even Jesus had twelve apostles (today they might be called spin doctors or press officers) who told people about his ideas, deeds and work. Thus, strategies involving the personalization, staging or positioning of individuals, as described in this paper, have, in fact, always existed, and always will.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Personalization is the key term. From a theoretical point of view, the phenomenon can be located on several levels: firstly in a social context, particularly where there are conflicting priorities between 'individual and society', secondly in public communication as conveyed through the media and thirdly in the context of organizational and corporate communications.

2.1 *Personalization as a social phenomenon*

The neo-liberal model of business and society has accelerated the personalization factor and associated phenomena of how individuals present themselves. In the western industrialized world, the trend over the last few decades has clearly been towards individualization. Values such as self-realization, self-fulfilment and self-satisfaction are playing an ever more important role. Happiness, pleasure and enjoyment of life are the new merits which are increasingly observed in members of today's so-called affluent society. People expect a lot more from life; they want to live their own lives, be fulfilled, find their own personal style and be unmistakeable and unique. Personality and individuality are becoming increasingly important values.

The "motor of individualization" is running at full speed (cf. Beck/Beck-Gernsheim 1994); the "battle for recognition" is becoming tougher (cf. Franck 1998); the "magic force of attention" is gaining a new dimension (cf. Tarr-Krüger 2001). The requirements of the labour market have changed (cf. Bridges 1994): more and more people are chasing after fewer and fewer jobs. Competition amongst job seekers is increasing and the selection procedures are becoming tougher. Modern-day capitalism, compounded by the negative excesses of globalization, needs "flexible people" (cf. Sennet 2000) who have to constantly promote, assert and position themselves anew. Not only freelancers

find themselves in such a situation; even employees and those in management positions (CEOs) are affected.

2.2 Personalization in the media

From the perspective of the media, personalization is relatively easy to define. It is all about the news factor, one of many factors alongside proximity, topicality, target group interests, etc. which play a dominant role when selecting which news to bring. Prominent personalities from the worlds of politics, business, culture and sport, etc. are very newsworthy. The more an event is endowed with a personal factor, i.e. deals with the actions or fate of individuals, the more chance it has of becoming a news item. It is noticeable that personalization in the media has become increasingly important over the last few years and the media are focusing more on individuals in their reports (cf. Park/Berger 2004, Eisenegger/Imhof 2004, Nessmann 2005, Zerfaß/Sandhu 2006). Nowadays almost all print media have sections dealing exclusively with *Society, People, VIPs, Celebrities* – and not only the tabloids, but also quality newspapers and business magazines. Tendencies towards personalization in the media have gone so far as to encourage the creation of special TV and newspaper formats which just report on so-called Celebs. The editors and journalists are known as *society reporters*. The gossip press is booming and business with vanity is thriving.

2.3 Personalization within organizations

Within the context of organizational communication – defined here as communication within/by/about organizations¹ – personalization is principally about the deployment of individuals (ideally governed by strategic planning) for the purposes of internal and external communication, i.e. a method of staging and positioning companies/individuals, and thus a communication strategy or a possible variation on the strategy of communication management. Personalization is becoming a key factor – for one-person businesses, small and medium-sized enterprises and large listed companies alike. It is becoming essential to open up companies and their management to the public eye and to increase their transparency. The stakeholders' interest is growing in what type of person the boss is and media reports focus ever more strongly on the individuals

¹ There does not appear to be a standard definition for 'organizational communication' at present. The most up-to-date review can be found in the handbook of *Public Relations Research: European and International Perspectives and Innovations*, Zerfass/van Ruler/Sriramesh eds. (2008).

who run a company. Against this background, CEO communication or CEO positioning is growing in importance (cf. Gaines-Ross 2003, Becker/Müller 2004, Casanova 2004, Deekeling/Arndt 2006, Hochegger Research 2006, Zerfaß/Sandhu 2006, Biehl 2007). Communication management for individuals, or personal communication management, is turning into an indispensable component of organizational and corporate communications/PR.

3 THE PERSONALITY MARKET

Personal public relations is becoming an important economic factor in the PR business, above all in connection with the *marketing* of individuals (personality or celebrity marketing) where PR has a special role to play, and has become an independent discipline (just like in corporate communication). In his book, *High Visibility. The Making and Marketing of Professionals into Celebrities*, Kotler, one of the best known experts on marketing, analysed the US market for celebrities with his team and attributed PR with the most dominant role of all communication disciplines: "the most essential support for most aspirants comes from public relations" (cf. Rein/Kotler/Stoller, 1997:268).

Our first studies for the *personal communication management* research project² revealed that the market is also booming in Europe: more and more PR agencies and PR consultants accompany politicians, businessmen, scientists, artists and sports professionals, as well as individuals from showbiz, the fashion and TV worlds as they become public figures. In doing so, they offer their clients personal coaching (alongside classic PR activities) including interview and presentation techniques, preparation for public appearances and press conferences, image and brand creation, colour and style consultations. People in management positions – particularly CEOs – are becoming more important for corporate communication. In stark contrast with the American market, hardly anybody ever talks about this type of consultancy work in Europe,

² The "Personal Communication Management" (PCM) research project, including a focus on continuing education, was initiated by the author of this paper at the University of Klagenfurt in 2003. The many different ways in which individuals present themselves have since been investigated in a number of seminar papers and diploma dissertations. The university course on PCM was first held in the academic year 2005/2006. So far it is the only university-based continuing education course which deals with the positioning of individuals and provides both a solid theoretical foundation and practice-oriented work: www.pcm-lehrgang.at

preferring to see it as an *undercover activity* which is carried out confidentially and very discretely.

Personalization is seen as a key factor for successful PR/organizational communication and is unlikely to disappear from the everyday work of agencies and consultants. Demand is increasing: well-known politicians, managers and stars from showbiz often have their own team of experts who advise them in all aspects of public relations: specialist consultants, ghostwriters, photographers, media trainers, colour and style consultants, press officers, etc.

3.1 *The 'key players' on the personality market*

The *key players* on the personality market are: the protagonists, the media, the audience and the consultants. None of them can function in a vacuum and thus co-exist in a kind of symbiosis.

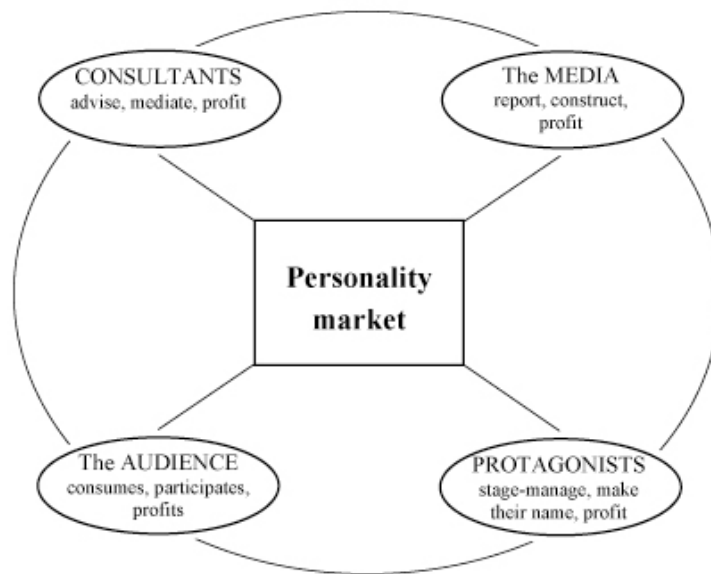


Fig. 1 The personality market

(1) *The protagonists*: the spectrum ranges from largely unknown individuals to prominent figures from various fields. They are all pushing their way into the media and profit by making themselves better known, thus guaranteeing popularity, power, influence or financial success. (2) *The media* (print, TV, radio, internet, etc.) include more reports on the protagonists and profit from increased circulation and sales figures. (3) *The audience* consumes these 'stories', takes part in what is going on, identifies with the celebrities and profits by satisfying their voyeuristic needs. (4) *The consultants*

(marketing or PR consultants) mediate between the protagonists, the media and the audience; they publish books, hold seminars and profit by charging fees.

3.2 *The book market*

Not only the market for professional consultants is booming; the book market is also growing rapidly. Over the last few years, so many 'how to' books have been published, providing tips on *promoting, marketing or branding yourself* and dealing with a wide range of concepts connected with the marketing of individuals, that it is almost impossible to gain an overview. A review of the literature published mostly in German showed that there was very little agreement on the terms used (cf. Nessmann 2002/2003).³ Since that first review, the number of publications has increased still further. The most important authors of books published on this topic in English are listed below by year of publication: Rein/Kotler/Stoller (1987/1997/2006), Dainard (1990), Leeds (1992), Franklin (1996), Ballback/Slater (1998), Rye (1998), Bridges (1998), Peters (1999), Baker (2000), Herman (2000), Spillane (2000), Trout/Rivkin (2000), Inches (2001), Ries/Trout (2001), Edwards (2002), Genasi (2002), Graham (2002), Roffer (2002), Montoya/Vandehey/Viti (2003), Montoya/Vandehey (2005), Pringle (2004), McNally/Speak (2006), Arruda/Dixson (2007), Marcum/Smith (2007), Van Yoder (2007).⁴

The quality of these books differs: quite a few of them give advice in the 'how to' format, although some are partially based on solid theoretical foundations. A more detailed analysis would go beyond the scope of this paper. Furthermore, depending on their professional background, the authors approach the topic either from a marketing or a PR perspective, falling back on various schools of thought and theoretical disciplines (e.g. pragmatism, symbolic interactionism, impression management), often without actually mentioning them by name. Almost all of these authors give instructions on how to identify one's personal potential (strengths, values, visions, goals, desires, etc.), how to find one's Unique Selling Proposition (USP) and how to leave a lasting impression on

³ The two articles by Nessmann are almost identical in terms of contents; they only really differ in their title.

⁴ A longer list of "how-to" books published in German and English is on the homepage of the "Personal Communication Management" research project and university course: www.pcm-lehrgang.at or: www.uni-klu.ac.at/~knessman

others. Most start from the assumption that *people can be turned into a brand*,⁵ in other words that the characteristics of product branding also apply to people.

One thing that really sticks out in these 'how-to' books, whether scientifically grounded or not, is the way that the language is strongly business oriented. They talk about *the individual as a company*, or *the individual as a product* who is 're-packaged' as something to be sold. *Manage yourself as you would manage a successful business* is the creed some authors preach. The concept of the *market* has become the dominant metaphor. To a certain extent, individuals are degraded to purely economic units. Many authors deal with what is actually quite a contradictory topic in a one-sided, yet catchy way. Socially critical questions are usually ignored. Against this background it is hardly surprising that the topics of *promoting/marketing/branding yourself* – at least in Europe – generate a lot of scepticism in many people and are generally seen negatively. Here is not the place to continue the socio-political debate on the sense or lack of it behind such offers (cf. Nessmann 2005).

In contrast, there is very little academic discussion of these topics. There are a few books covering certain aspects, such as celebrities, stars, high visibility, and only isolated articles on personality PR, as the review and critical analysis of German-language PR journals and handbooks revealed (cf. Nessmann 2002 or 2003). A search through three important PR journals⁶ for the key words relating to this paper only produced one match. Motion (1999) published an explorative study entitled "Personal Public Relations" in *Public Relations Review*. She questioned PR professionals in New Zealand who also had politicians among their clients and identified two approaches: a *formative* and an *advisory* one: "the formative mode is an active constitution of a public identity, whereas the advisory mode is a communication counseling approach" (1999:465). While the formative role reflects the marketing techniques of promotion and selling, the advisory role is based more on the PR roles of communication counselling and building up a relationship. This study illustrates the breadth and variety of personal PR: the spectrum ranges from classic marketing techniques and traditional communication approaches to methods of developing identity.

⁵ There is a collection of articles in German entitled "Mensch als Marke" ('people as brands') which also includes academic work on the topic (cf. Herbst 2003).

⁶ *Public Relations Review*, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Journal of Communication Management*.

3.3 *Communication counselling models*

Similar conclusions were reached in a meta-analysis of published works (cf. Nessmann 2007) which identified at least three different counselling models which vary particularly in terms of conception and planning.

The *branding or marketing model* follows the 'people as brands' approach, taking advantage of the findings of modern brand management and marketing. Advocates of this model work with the umbrella terms of *personal branding/personal marketing* and generally follow the 4 Ps when drawing up their concepts, namely *product*: services, proposals, individual qualities; *price*: the conditions under which the person is prepared to offer their services (fees, salary); *place*: where the person offers their 'products' or services; and *promotion*: communication tools like advertising, sponsoring, testimonials, public relations, etc., whereby public relations is ascribed a significant role.

The *reputation model* also exploits the findings of modern brand management and recognizes 'people' as 'brands'. Representatives of this model use the term *reputation management*, thus avoiding the concept of 'image'. Attempts to distinguish between the definitions of the two are not particularly convincing from a theoretical standpoint although the ways in which the authors propose building up the reputation of a brand/person certainly do differ.⁷ The cornerstones of the reputation management model are predictability, calculability and sustainability and orientation towards the stakeholders (investors, analysts, clients, employees, etc.) as well as potential support for the company or the person which arises from this. Stakeholder monitoring (cf. Bauhofer 2004) or CEO reputation monitoring (cf. Casanova 2002, 2004) forms the empirical core and is also the starting point for all scenarios which essentially concentrate on the following: firstly, positioning topics through issues management in the form of key messages, secondly deliberate 'stage management' in terms of event management and media placement. The reputation quotient (RQ) developed in the USA by Fombrun and used on several occasions in Europe by Wiedmann is a valid empirical tool for measuring the reputation of a company. This concept and its reputation factors are very helpful when ascertaining the reputation of CEOs (cf. Fombrun/van Riel 2004).

⁷ Sound definitions of 'image' and 'reputation' are given by Eisenegger (2005) and Herger (2006), for example.

The "issues monitoring" model developed by Eisenegger (2005) could also be a useful tool.

The *public relations model* can be seen as a further development of the reputation and brand-oriented model. It also takes account of the values attributed to the individual or company, of the relevant stakeholders and the sustainability of the measure. In this context, PR is not to be understood as mere media work or as just one element of the marketing mix but as an independent communication discipline. Within the framework of organizational communication, PR is an indispensable function of management. In terms of its individual planning stages, however, the PR model is much more complex and systematic than the models described above as it follows the individual stages of classic PR: analysis, strategies, tactics, evaluation (cf. Nessmann (2005) for more details).

In contrast to the marketing and reputation models, which are more inspired by economic factors, the PR model is firmly anchored in communication. The person-oriented view of public relations should be seen as complementing previous public relations theories which have either reflected PR from an organizational perspective or prefer to focus on society. As an example: while organization-oriented PR approaches ask what contribution public relations makes to achieving the organization's goals, the central question in person-oriented PR is: *what contribution can public relations make to achieving personal and organization-oriented goals?* Here, cultural, social and economic aspects are taken into account.

The theoretical and methodological elements of these three counselling models are taken up and embellished in the personal communication management model.

4 PERSONAL COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

Here personal communication management (PCM) is used as a collective name for all forms of professionally organized communication (i.e. systematically planned, continually carried out and properly evaluated) by and for individuals in all areas of society. The overriding aim is to successfully position individuals and, to a certain extent, the companies they work for, in the public eye. PCM does not only focus on CEOs as role models but also, in a broader sense, on positioning 'major' and 'minor' celebrities in society, such as politicians, artists and sports professionals, but also freelance professionals (lawyers, doctors, life coaches, education counsellors,

management and business consultants, therapists, etc). Many of them are also members of organizations or networked within (trade) associations and subject to the social conditions of competition.

Behaviour-oriented communication is at the heart of this definition, according to which *communication* is not only about – to put it briefly – *talking* and *writing* (e.g. in the form of press releases), but also about *doing* and *acting* (e.g. taking on socio-political responsibility). Such an understanding of communication makes it easiest to include and describe the many endeavours of individuals to leave as positive or sustainable an impression as possible on others. This is what I consider to be the rationale behind my research.

PCM as an academic discipline investigates the reasons for the increasing importance of personalization and the social environment in which this is taking place, as well as the many different possibilities for individuals from all areas of society to present themselves, and looks at the different positioning models, methods and tools which can be used. In fact PCM can only be investigated from an interdisciplinary perspective, including sociology, psychology, philosophy, history, business, media and communication studies (organizational communication, media ethics, media economics and cultural studies in particular) as all of them have an important role to play.

PCM as a form of coaching or counselling places special emphasis on individuals and their characters (values, strengths and weaknesses) and positions them in the most important markets (i.e. capital, sales, labour markets or public opinion). PCM consultants/coaches (or personality consultants/coaches) help their clients to achieve the following:

- to recognize their personal potential (strengths, weaknesses, values, visions, etc.);
- to leave a lasting impression on groups which are relevant for them, both internally and externally (impression management);
- to create a positive reputation (reputation management);
- to position themselves as a 'brand' in the public eye (personal branding).

Here PCM is defined as a coaching and counselling service, although the transitions are fuzzy. PR consultants, for example, generally develop communication concepts and give their clients tips, suggestions and advice while in their role as personality coaches,

experts endeavour not to give any advice but rather to accompany their clients through a process involving supportive questioning. This should prevent coaches from becoming part of the system, on the one hand, and ensures that 'coachees' do not identify with the experts' advice too closely and stop paying attention to their own experience and ideas for solutions, on the other. Clients are offered several alternatives and have to decide for themselves which option is best. Here it is particularly important not to think on the processing level, i.e. not to concentrate on contents (*which solution is possible?*), but to act on the processing level (*how can clients arrive at their solution?*). Coaches do not give priority to their own ideas and solutions but believe in the competence and self-responsibility of their clients: everybody can find their own solutions; everybody is responsible for themselves.

5 POSITIONING PEOPLE EFFECTIVELY

If PCM is to be carried out professionally, it should be done so consciously, systematically and continually. The clients' communicative appearances should be planned strategically.

In the theoretical section, the various counselling models were outlined (the marketing, reputation and PR models). The PCM model introduced here unites their approaches. During the personal communication management project, an ideal concept was developed for clients in politics, business, culture, sport and education, etc. (cf. Nessmann 2005) which has since been modified and adapted (cf. Nessmann 2007). The main phases are presented below, bearing in mind that there are no standard solutions. PR concepts cannot be bought off the peg but are always tailor-made. Everybody is an individual and therefore every PR/communication concept is different. As a result, personality consultants/coaches have to be very cautious and take account of individuals and their unique environment.

5.1 Briefing

Every counselling or PR/communication concept begins with a briefing session to clarify the client's problem(s), viewpoints and goals as well as their time frame and budget, which obviously vary considerably from client to client. Thus, the main aim of a relatively unknown *artist* may be to make her name better known. A *young businessman* who has just taken over the family business, for example, may initially

wish to position himself within the company and 'win' the confidence and understanding of his employees. And as a third example, a well-known *politician* is electioneering and is primarily interested in the positioning of her image and issues.

5.2 *Analysis*

After clarifying the starting position – the problem(s) and task(s) – *stock has to be taken* of all facts relating to the individual and/or the company (e.g. how well known, image and reputation, values, visions, networks, market position, competitors, communication activities to date, etc.). These are then *analyzed* (e.g. target performance comparison and SWOT analysis). The overriding goal of this comprehensive and usually very time-consuming phase is to establish

- the client's core qualities, their key identity or branding
- their USP or individual personal trademark
- their value-oriented model (mission statement)
- a brand name (pseudonym, nickname, associations).⁸

These personal characteristics are then compared and matched up with the company-specific characteristics (brand core, company's mission statement, strategy, philosophy, etc.). This analysis forms the basis for the next steps. Qualitative target group surveys, perception tests or quantitative data can be used to ascertain the relevant factors for the client's reputation.⁹

5.3 *Strategy*

The strategy is at the heart of every concept and consists of four steps: formulating the individual's and company's *communication goals, target groups, messages* and *guidelines*. Here it is a question of working out realistic and checkable communication goals, identifying the most important target groups, stages and networks for the individual or company, formulating relevant key messages and establishing strategic guidelines for communication. The strategy block involves complex planning which

⁸ Examples: *ARNI* for Arnold Schwarzenegger, governor of California, *ANGI* for Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, *Mr KELLY* for the CEO of the international snack manufacturer Kelly.

⁹ The PCM research project at the University of Klagenfurt analysed self-management or self-discovery exercises described in the literature. After numerous trial runs with various clients, a set of methods was put together for the PCM course. Detailed information on all of these tests and methods would go beyond the scope of this paper.

must be approached very scrupulously. The individual elements are all inter-related and cannot be considered separately.

The actual communication goals are derived from the situation analysis carried out in the first phase. Depending on the initial position and ultimate goal, it can be a question of making the person, and consequently the organization, better known, creating a positive image, (re)establishing credibility, arousing attention and interest, creating or preventing media presence, making personal or corporate achievements visible or creating acceptance, sympathy, recognition or trust (cf. Nessmann (2005:38) for details).

Concepts involving CEOs have to combine corporate core themes with personal core messages, i.e. the topics must be relevant for the company and target groups/stakeholders alike and the key messages must be formulated according to the strategy and specifically for the target groups and situation. To come back to our case studies, the *young businessman* who wants to establish himself in relation to internal and external stakeholders and who is interested in gaining the confidence and understanding of both can concentrate on issues relevant to the work place and/or future company strategies. The *artist* could address socio-political topics affecting the target group which fit in with her personality profile. The *politician*, in contrast, will communicate the topics brought up by her party as part of its issues management policy, associating them with her personal preferences, strengths, experiences and values, etc.

Identifying these four strategic elements is a very individual process which can only be outlined briefly here (cf. Nessmann (2005:43-47) for more details). Establishing strategic guidelines requires an especially sensitive approach for it is generally at this stage that fundamental decisions are made on what type of communication should take place, e.g. loud or soft, emotional or objective, media-centred or dialogue-oriented, provocative or consensus-oriented. The politician, the young businessman and the artist all have to find their own personal style of communication. This, again, depends on their individual values and their particular character as well as on the existing culture or philosophy of the organization. The task of personality consultants/coaches is to help their clients find their own paths by asking supportive questions.

5.4 *Tactics*

Following the analytical and strategic phases described above, the measures to be taken are planned in detail in the *tactics* phase. The specialist literature lists a wealth of person-related PR tools but rather unsystematically. Borrowing from current management terminology, I will attempt to systematically classify the numerous individual tools into four clusters.

5.4.1 *Self-management – documentation of personal data*

In this cluster, the data are documented which were ascertained by the coach and client while taking stock and analysing the situation. The minimum requirements are a current curriculum vitae with the most important facts and figures, a photo archive and a personal 'branding dossier'. The latter is a personal description covering questions which journalists are asking more frequently nowadays, such as strengths, weaknesses, successes and failures, goals, visions, characteristics, passions, values, hobbies, likes and dislikes, motto, philosophy of life, mission statement, etc.

The task of personality consultants is to prepare their clients for these and other questions. Experience has shown that working out good answers is not that easy and takes up a lot of time.

5.4.2 *Impression management – self-presentation techniques*

This cluster includes all types of behaviour and forms of communication with which individuals can influence and control the impression they would like to leave on stakeholders. Literature on impression management has identified a wealth of defensive and assertive self-presentation techniques which individuals can use, depending on the situation, to steer their image in a certain direction.¹⁰

Impression management is fundamentally about decent behaviour, respect and politeness, honest and open dealings with people. That also includes keeping promises, admitting mistakes, confessing to weaknesses and apologizing if necessary.¹¹

Experience shows that it is not easy for consultants to convince their clients of the

¹⁰ It is almost impossible to keep track of the literature on impression management. There is a good overview of numerous academic surveys and experiments in English in Rosenfeld et al. (2002) or in the German-language classics by Mummendey (1995) and Ewert/Piwinger (2007).

¹¹ As an analysis of the election results shows, Arnold Schwarzenegger was re-elected governor of California, amongst other reasons, because he made use of the apology strategy. He admitted his mistakes, signaling to the voters that he had learnt from his errors.

necessity of such tactics (e.g. apologies). They generally tend to dispute, retract or deny responsibility, etc. All in all, this is a very delicate and demanding area of coaching. However, numerous surveys have confirmed that virtues like politeness, friendliness, honesty, helpfulness, modesty and sincerity are most appreciated, with arrogance and dishonesty being perceived most negatively.

Conscious use of language, rhetoric, clothing, symbols, symbolic behaviour, office furnishings, etc. are also self-presentation techniques. The effects of individual tactics have been proved in many a survey. The general public is increasingly aware of impression management details like outfit or accessories. The media sometimes include very detailed reports on the clothing and hair styles of prominent figures. In this light, it can certainly make sense to involve external experts (e.g. for colour or style consultations).

5.4.3 Media management – positioning topics

This cluster of tools is about protecting clients from bad publicity on the one hand and generating positive news on the other. It is about dealing with journalists correctly in order to position topics selectively in the media. Basically, all the classic tools of media work are at our disposal, e.g. press releases, press conferences, letters to the editor, guest commentaries, interviews, statements, home stories, reports, story telling, etc.

This cluster does not only cover the mass media but also media produced for the individual, such as a personal website, blogs, business cards, signed cards or postcards, posters, brochures or books (memoirs, autobiographies, non-fiction). The importance of photos, and especially portraits, should be particularly stressed. Although scientifically proven, the powerful effects of pictures and photos are still generally underestimated in everyday PR.

The task of personality consultants is to precisely and creatively plan, arrange and stage-manage the individual tools to suit the particular strategy. It is primarily a case of stage-managing events (e.g. public appearances) with the aim of creating something newsworthy for the media (event management). A second task is to show clients in a favourable light in personal talks with journalists, for example by admitting certain of their weaknesses but simultaneously emphasizing their strengths, goals or objectives. Another job of personality consultants is to prepare their clients for public appearances

(news programmes, chat shows or public speeches). In this situation it can again be useful to involve external specialists (e.g. media or communication trainers).

The training programme should not, however, be reduced to learning rhetorical and journalistic skills but should have a holistic goal which includes the client's basic values, strengths, weaknesses and preferences as identified in the analysis phase.

5.4.4 Social management – taking on social responsibility

This cluster covers all social activities and the client's social commitment, such as being involved in associations, clubs, interest groups; providing financial support for charitable institutions (donations, sponsoring); taking part in public debates, panel discussions; holding lectures or seminars; taking on socio-political responsibility (e.g. acting as a contact person for cultural, political, economic, academic or sports institutions, associations, interest groups) and participating in all forms of networking. The great effects of small tokens of appreciation should not be underestimated either, e.g. personal gifts, birthday greetings, spontaneously calling friends, colleagues or journalists, or personal invitations to dinner or a business lunch.

Those in management positions (particularly CEOs) must obviously coordinate all of these activities with the company's strategies (especially corporate citizenship, corporate governance, corporate social responsibility).

5.5 Implementation

When putting these tactics into effect, certain fundamental principles have to be observed. All these activities are only credible when they are honestly intended and not at variance with the client's character, values or personal convictions. Trust, credibility and authenticity arise when statements, actions and values coincide. In other words, individuals appear to be authentic, trustworthy and credible when their deeds (actions) are consistent with their words (statements) and values (ethical and moral principles).

Not every measure suits every type of person. We would not suggest that somebody who dislikes public speaking should hold a series of lectures; likewise somebody who does not like writing should not be asked to write guest commentaries in newspapers.

In conclusion, whether the client is an artist, businessman or politician, a package of tools has to be put together which suits the individual. If one of our three fictitious 'clients' is a sports enthusiast (e.g. golf player or marathon runner), we will select the

appropriate forums, such as sports events or sports magazines concentrating on golf or running. If somebody is interested in art, we will find appropriate platforms (e.g. art associations, vernissages) or draw up an art sponsoring project. If somebody is already very well known and has a high popularity rating, a testimonial campaign could be interesting in certain circumstances.

5.6 Evaluation

Finally, personality concepts for clients should include evaluative methods, i.e. the personality consultant should decide what methods and tools can be used to actually check whether the formulated goals were achieved. The evaluation proposals (monitoring success and effectiveness) can also be developed as an independent package. Large-scale PR campaigns for managers should include a precise definition of what is to be examined, who should do the evaluation, how much time this will take and how much money is available. Basically there is a whole collection of tools at our disposal in this field.

Summative evaluation is about checking at the end of a campaign whether and to what extent the communicative goals formulated in the strategic phase were actually achieved, e.g. by ascertaining how well known the manager is now, carrying out a new image survey or analysing the client's media appearances. In personality communication, a *formative evaluation* is a more constant process of analysis and reflection by the individual. With the help of the personality coach, the client's statements and actions are critically analysed relating to the intended effect (particularly in terms of credibility and authenticity). The findings then form the basis for continued work.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS

This paper has attempted to show that personal communication management is a responsible task. Positioning individuals must be systematically planned, continuously implemented and constantly (re-)evaluated. Personality communication is not just about pure publicity, cheap sales tricks, egocentric self-presentation or short-term attention. Personalization should not be confused with 'privatization' either: individuals' private lives should remain private, if at all possible. The PCM model presented here relates to the values of the individual and/or the company and aims to be sustainable.

From the perspective of organizational communication, personality communication is a responsible management task and the chances and dangers of its strategies must be carefully considered. In terms of 'integrated communication', managers' public appearances must harmonize with the organization's other communicative efforts; the corporate brand and personal brand must be coordinated. Personalization must not turn into an end in itself (ego marketing by vain managers) but must be in the company's service. The individuals' actions must harmonize with their statements and values.

PR and communication consultants interested in personal communication management must acquire additional knowledge from the fields of coaching, branding, reputation management and impression management alongside sound experience in their field of corporate communication. It is particularly important to comply with ethical and moral principles, as laid down in PR codices, for there is quite a lot at stake: trust, understanding, acceptance, credibility, integrity and – last but not least – the reputation of the individual (and the company).

The necessary qualifications and competences are correspondingly varied: a PCM consultant/coach must know about:

- the personality market (the most important players, seminar and book markets)
- the most important drivers of personalization (social developments, changes in values)
- the principles and specialities of the branch (e.g. politics, business, culture, showbiz, etc.)
- the various planning concepts and models (marketing, reputation and PR models)
- the wide range of tactics and tools (self-management, impression management, media management, social management)
- the chances and dangers of personalization and stage-managing strategies
- the fundamental principles of responsible counselling or coaching (particularly ethical and moral principles).

Just how detailed and specific the knowledge should be for the tasks listed above should have become clear in the course of this paper. A critical analysis of an increasing business orientation and the negative associations and high emotions that it triggers off is particularly important for personality consultants. The qualifications profiles

published by PR researchers and professional associations no longer suffice to describe the new demands placed on *personal communication management* and the necessary additional qualifications for person-oriented PR are not being provided at present.

The analyses, research and interviews carried out in the PR branch during the PCM research project indicate that PR consultants increasingly see themselves as *coaches*, or at least their field of responsibilities has developed in that direction. There is also a clear tendency towards more so-called *personality trainers* offering their services on the market. Deficits in skills can be found in both groups, i.e. classic PR experts often lack training and coaching skills while traditional trainers and coaches lack PR skills. And both professional groups need the specialist qualifications and skills for personal communication management as described in this article. Compensating for these deficits is the new challenge and task of PR research and continuing education.

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