

# **The History of Public Relations in Iran**

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## ***Abstract***

*The term of Public Relations in Iran used for the first time in Iran in 1953 and an office known as the same term established in Iran National Oil Co. Like the other foreign and imported phenomena at first was not paid more attention by the managers and*

## **Introduction**

Studying the performance of IRPR and its historical development indicate that, the most important task of PR is to publicize the materials, one-way news advertisement and doing the affairs concerning the administrative procedures and advertisement in order to make profit for the masters of the tools and facilities.

The managers who shoulder the responsibility of the affairs after the Islamic Revolution Victory in 1979 did not pay more attention to PR activities for various reasons and even left this profession as it was the one originated from America but, after the end of Iran - Iraq war, they started to be in need of PR activities in different areas and some measures were taken for revival of PR and also some commissions were established aimed at explaining the responsibilities of PR, advertisement, public communication and training issues. What is in front of you is a glance at PR historical development in Iran.

Totally, the historical development of PR in Iran can be recognized as follows:

- 1) Traditional and advertising PR: The logic dominating this theory includes the logic of power, authority and ruling. In this system, PR agents are affected by the organizational and social (to do)s and (not to do)s.
- 2) Ideological PR: Basic presumption of this theory is that PR is the essential tool and purpose for making the political system ruling the country legitimized and it also intends to create an atmosphere in which no conflicts can be occurs among the various social, organizational and political areas officials.
- 3) The pattern for Genuine Humanity PR Development: The main point to this theory is distribution of power resources, opportunities and the facilities among the PR, Social, Political and organizational agents and this prevents

the incidence of a despotic manager who creates an organizational and oligarchy and dictatorship.

What we consider today as the Public Relations, be it in terms of the term and the Public Relations profession, has been appeared for the first time in Iran Oil Company. Among the Iran public and private institutes and organizations, Iran Oil Company established Public Relations Office for the first time and before any others. There was only one Public Relations and press office in past Iran and England Oil Company till 1991 and this office was the link between the company and the press. An office titled the same was established in Iran National Oil Company after the nationalization of oil industry in Iran and it was the name of this office which was then changed into Public Relations.

The first seminar on Public Relations was also held by the oil company in Iran in 20<sup>th</sup> December 1964 in Abadan and the second seminar on Public Relations in Kerman in 9<sup>th</sup> October 1965.

Imitating this company and some years following establishing Public Relations in the Iran oil company, other ministries and institutes established Public Relations Offices. Following the establishment of Public Relations Offices in Iran, there was the tendency for training the Public Relations officials and staff for this unit. For reaching such aim, the past ministry for information and tourism held short training course. During these short training course, the staff of Public Relations office of the ministries took part in order to learn the principles and arrangements and techniques for Public Relations. The scholars and pioneers of Public Relations trained them as required with due regard to the duration of the course and education background of the participants.

Some of the ministries, for example ministry of foreign affairs, took the required measure for training their staff and affiliates in the foreign countries in the short terms on Public Relations.

Some studies were done in 1966 for a college of Public Relations which resulted in 1967 in establishing a “higher institute on press and Public Relations”. Executing the entrance exam for the student graduated from the high schools in the fields of literature, natural sciences and journalism were selected for the education in BA Public Relations. The students could get their BA in Public Relations after 4 years of study and passing 140 units of lesson.

The higher institute of “the Press and Public Relations” started its activity in the study year of 1967-8. The first group of the students of this college was graduated in June 1971. The activity of this college continued till 1978 and some of the BA graduated in Public Relations were employed.

After the Islamic Revolution and re-opening of the universities, this college named as “Social Sciences College” has continued its activity as part of the Allameh Tabatabaee University. Now, the graduates from this university are of four fields one of which is BA in social sciences with the branch of Relations Sciences. In fact, the Public Relations have moved to the recent field.

Concerning the name of the “Press and Public Relations” it should be said that in 9<sup>th</sup> December 1968 the name of this higher institute was changed into “Higher Institute for Relations Sciences” and in 14<sup>th</sup> June 1971 it was changed into the college for “Social Relations”.

## **Public Relations after Islamic Revolution Victory in 1987**

Following the Islamic Revolution Victory in 10<sup>th</sup> February 1987, some of the Public Relations were ignored, specially the Public Relations of the large units as they were supposed to be at the servant of the previous regime, by the first generation of the manager and officials. In fact, the judgment upon the legitimacy of the Public Relations was based on the legitimacy justification of the organizations' heads.

Statement and the manager who shoulder the responsibility of the departments and institutes management after the did not pay so much attention to the Public Relations related activities due to various factors such as the problems driven from rebuilding the organizations, and in some cases due to the managers' being young and lack of experience about advertisement and relations, and other problems. In this phase, the Public Relations offices and units titled "Public Relations and Islamic Guidance" did the affairs for Public Relations generally with new responsibilities. In fact, it can be said that in the first years of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the profession of Public Relations was spending its essence period in some parts.

After the works in the institutes and organizations were changed to the normal mode and the affairs started their natural cycle in the managements, there was a great tendency toward the Public Relations activities. At first, the high ranking officials of the country claimed for the lack of Public Relations related effective efforts in the speeches. These officials, in their speeches, sermons and messages, claimed about the lack of advertisement and Public Relations activities and called the officials and managers of Public Relations for doing the effective activities on Public Relations. These speeches and notes and the practically occurred problems made the officials take some measures for renewing the life and activating the Public Relations.

One of the first measures taken, was the seminar arranged by the Ministry of Islamic Guidance from 22 – 24 February in 1984 attended by the heads of the Public Relations and governmental units of the center.

After the victory of Islamic Revolution in 1987, some of the managers who were employed in the Public Relations units and continued the activities in this profession and became interested in it, hold some meetings and councils for promoting this profession and make its philosophy of being known to the people and officials with due regard to the problems faced in this regards in practice and made the decision to establish Public Relations Association in Iran. For the first time, in 1990, some of the experienced managers interested in Public Relations hold some meetings for establishing the Public Relations association and the draft of the letter of association and invited publicly all the officials interested in Public Relations by the mass media and finally in may 1991 and finally in Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> June, the first general meeting of Iran Public Relations Association was held in the public saloon of the Tehran Contemporary Arts Museum. Participation of so much agents, the interested and the graduated in Public Relations and social relations fields showed the interest and reception for establishing Public Relations Association in Iran. In this meeting, the letter of association was approved in 33 articles and 10 notes and the directorate was selected for 2 years.

## **Training Public Relations in Iran (Prior and past the 1978 Revolution)**

The first Public Relations in Iran started its work officially in August 1953 in the Iran ex Oil Company and its first administrators were Dr. Notghi, the professor of relations sciences and the contemporary poet and writer, Aboulghasem Halat and then Aboulfazl Marashi joined this group.

Until 1966, in some of the organizations and departments, special departments called advertisement and press or press and information was active and after this date the name of it was changed into Public Relations. In 1966, the officials of Iran National Oil Company, Keyhan media institute, the University of Tehran and ministry of information and tourism decided to establish the higher education center for Public Relations.

This center was opened after one year and more than 100 students among the graduates from high school were accepted in BA in Public Relations. This center selected the name of higher institute for press and Public Relations for itself.

This institute selected the name of (social sciences relations institute) for itself and then changed it to (college for social relations sciences) and till 1979 continued its activity. During the 13 years of activity of this college, almost 1000 persons got their degree in BA Public Relations.

After the victory of Revolution in 1978, the statesmen and the managers who accepted the responsibilities of the organizations management, based on the various factor, did not pay much attention toward the Public Relations. Gradually, the institutes and organizations moved to the normal position and the affairs were placed in the normal mode and the lack of Public Relations activities was known to them.

During the 8-year war by Iraq against Iran, the short courses on Public Relations were hold for the staff employed in the offices of Public Relations of the state run and private institutes. The field of Public Relations, omitted after the victory of revolution, was reopened by the attempts of Dr. Motamednejad, the father of communications sciences in Iran, Dr. Hamid Nitghi, the father of Iran Public Relations, and other professors in the University of Allameh Tabatabaee whose new name was social relations sciences.

After some years, the Islamic Azad Universities established the social relations sciences with the branch of Public Relations for the first time in Tehran Central Unit. The college for social sciences of Tehran University has BA in relations without branch of Public Relations. The Public Relations administrators request the officials to pay more attention to Public Relations in this university. In addition to the above mentioned universities, the comprehensive science applied university with cooperation of the Iran Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in the culture training center, has started the higher diploma course from 1998. More than the mentioned level of education, the general office for Public Relations in the ministries and organizations with cooperation of Public Relations Association, hold the training course for its staff on Public Relations. After the approval of the Public Relations regulations by the organization for administration and employment affairs of the country, in 1991 the first ceremony of selecting the country best Public Relations office was hold in order to motivate the Public Relations officials in Tehran and some of the were awarded and the president allocated some cultural and material awards for motivation of the managers.

Then, almost every year, the best Public Relations office is selected and motivated. The president and the members of the council of ministers and then the

country managers considered the Public Relations as the active field in the government and helped it improvement through allocating the required facilities and budget of this unit and promote its executive ability.

Now, the Public Relations profession is considered as a very important, sensitive, responsible and determinative profession.

The most important changes in Public Relations in Iran in two recent years are as following:

#### **A) Public Relations literature**

- 1- **Book publishing:** more than 40 books have been compiled and translated on Public Relations in Iran. Meanwhile, Public Relations agent institute is now working on an Encyclopedia of Public Relations of the world and Iran Public Relations License.
- 2- **Expertise journal publication**
  - 2-1- Public Relations agent quarterly
  - 2-2- Public Relations research quarterly
  - 2-3- Public Relations monthly
  - 2-4- 8<sup>th</sup> art monthly
  - 2-5- Public Relations bi-quarterly
- 3- **Establishing the first Public Relations expertise publication:** the first publication of expertise book and journals on Public Relations in Iran established by Mehdi Bagherian as the responsible manager in 2002 and its patentee was the research and scientific institute of Public Relations agent. This institute has published more than 150 books on Public Relations.

**B) Training:** Public Relations in Iran have experienced some changes on training and now it is in its complementary phase. In 2004, the first Public Relations College was established in Iran. Public Relations training have been also followed up by the state run and private institutes and the first Public Relations training course was hold in the provinces in Iran in 2004.

In 2003, the first Public Relations national training course was held by the Iran public Relations Experts. Now, in addition to the state run relations college, Islamic Azad University and comprehensive scientific and applied university now accept students in Higher Diploma and BA respectively.

**C) Electronic Public Relations:** The first Public Relations internet institute for Public Relations was established in 2001 in Iran with more than 3000 pages by the Public Relations agent research and scientific institute. Now, this databank is updated every day and it will be reconstructed in form of advanced programs as of 2005 ([www.iranpr.org](http://www.iranpr.org)). Some various web logs on Public Relations are now working for public information and they are more than 20 web logs. Meanwhile, all the Public Relations offices in the state run and private organizations ahs internet databank and are working in this area.

### **E) Public Relations Festivals:**

- 1- The festival for selecting the best Public Relations office in Iran: This festival is held in Iran by the general office for advertisement of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance as the official administrators of Public Relations in Iran and some presents are awarded to the different fields and branches.
- 2- Intra organizations Public Relations press festival: This festival is held every year by Iran Public Relations experts association and the best publications are awarded different gifts.
- 3- International Public Relations Conferences in Iran. Following the fourth IPRA international conference in Iran in the time of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (before the Revolution in 1357), the first international conference on Public Relations in Iran was held in 16-17 March in 2004 attended by 19 Public Relations figures in Iran and the world in Tehran. This conference could put forward the Iran Public Relations as the requirement, technology and know-how in the country.
- 4- The first fair for Iran Public Relations Capabilities in February 2004 by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance General Office for Advertisement in Tehran.

### **F) Budget and Facilities:**

Now, Iran Public Relations offices enjoy more favorite equipments in comparison with the two recent decades from the organizational status but, it has not yet reached its merited status. Some of the institutes and organizations are in the better positions due to the facilities and budget and their annual budget is considerable.

For example, in accordance with the law, 2% of the deposits of the people in the Bank Melli Iran is spent on the propaganda and advertisement.

Total amount of the people deposit in Bank Melli Iran in 2003 was 118 billion Rials and Bank Melli allocated 2% of this, namely 230 Million Tomans, based on the legal regulations.

Now, two associations of “Iran Public Relations Experts” and Iran Public Relations” are the main Public Relations forms in Iran and have their own contributions to Iran Public Relations.

Esfahan province Public Relations Association and Kerman Province Public Relations Associations are among the expertise Public Relations institutes in Iran which have done considerable activities. The first Public Relations capabilities Festival was held in 2004 by Esfahan Public Relations Association which was successful a lot. Recently the Public Relations offices in Kashan, Gorgan and some other provinces have been established but, are not active much and they are recently established. Recently, Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance General Office for Advertisement has established some associations, the most important of which are Public Relations Coordination throughout the country and also association of the Director Generals who have monthly meeting.

### **G) Public Relations awards:**

For the first time and concurrent with holding the first international conference on Public Relations in Iran, Dr. Hamid Notghi's gift, the father of public, was awarded by the Public Relations agent institute to 3 pioneer figures in Public Relations in Iran. In 2001, another gift titled "braveness gift" was established by Public Relations agent monthly and for the first time awarded to the manager of Public Relations office of hemophilia association for his braveness and protection from the rights of the persons with hemophilia infected by AIDS as the result of infected blood.

### **H) Public Relations Research Institute**

- 1- Kargozar Public Relations Institute was established in 2001. It is the first Iranian Corporation which accomplished to set the international relations for expansion of Iran Public Relations. It has made a two-year contract with the Global Tanitim Corporation in Turkey. It also tends to extend its ties with Persian Golf area, Europe and America.
- 2- Public Relations Research Institute: This institute has been established from 1999 and is now active in research and publication affairs.
- 3- Universal 8<sup>th</sup> Art Consultation Corporation: this institute has obtained the work permit in 2004 and is now active in the areas of training, consultation and research.
- 4- Search Institute: This institute has been established in 2003 and does not take any actions and is now inactive.

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