

## The Analysis of Public Relations Position within an Organization Structure and the Implication of its Role and Function in Various Organizations

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### Abstract

The aim of this research are to analysis position of public relations in the organizational structure and the implications of roles & functions in various organizations. The basic concept about public relations role: expert prescriber, problem solving facilitator, communications facilitator and communication technician. This research uses qualitative methods. Informants are public relations of Persada Hospital, public relations of Hotel Santika, public relations of Jatim Park Group, and public relations of Widyagama University. The result of this research shows the position of public relations at Persada Hospital which is directly under the Director of Hospital acting as communication technician role, expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem solving process facilitator. While the position of public relations in Santika Hotel under seles manager division role as communication technician, proved there are still many bureaucratic levels that must be passed in carrying out its function. The position of public relations Jatim Park Group is under the directors 1 who acts as communication technician role, expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem solving process facilitator For Widyagama University, the position of public relations is under the direct leader of the highest role as communication technician role and communication facilitator. Performance of public relations relating to the role and position in this study is considered positive and in accordance with the portion of work.

**Keywords:** *implications, organizational structure, public relations positions, roles & functions*

### INTRODUCTION

Grunig and Hunt define public relations as communication process, *“the management of communication between and organization and its public”* [1]. In line with Grunig, Jefkin views public relations as whole forms of planned communication to achieve specific purpose [2]. Those definitions describes that public relations is communication activities in an organization for its audiences. The core activity of public relations is building two-way communication. Furthermore, the organization spread information to public. In addition, the organization also looks for information as well as listens to what the public want.

Other definition states that public relations is more than merely building communication. It manages an effort of building mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and its public [3]. *“The management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depend”*. Cutlip et al. view public relations as something that has managerial function to establish and to maintain mutually beneficial relationship

between an organization and its publics that determines its success or failure.

The concept is considered essential since the organization’s adaptation ability shows its function at management level. This concept emphasizes on improvement steps that have to be done by the organization beside the communication attempts. In relation to management function, public relations is related to how an organization establishes its policy to show a responsible performance. On the other hand, public relations as means of communication has responsibility to build communication. In addition, public relations has special responsibility to serve the organization leaders, especially to help them connect to the public well.

In order to gain the best results and achieve the planned purposes, top management has to be supported by structural and functional public relations which is involved in top management. The top managements are those who make decision and control an organization [4]. Furthermore, there are several categories which classify public relations based on its position and utilization within an organization [4]:

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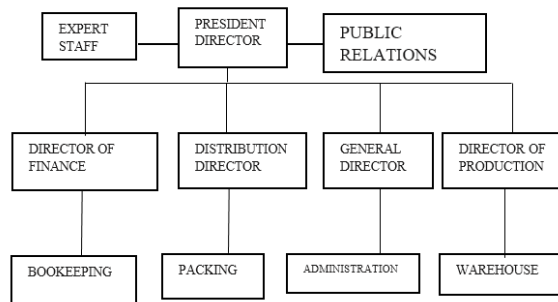
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1. Several organizations place public relations in high position that directly responsible to the head of administration. Other organizations place public relations in lower order that is placed right under marketing division, human resource division, legal division, or other decision maker in higher order.
2. Several organizations place public relations in separate unit, whereas other organizations put this position inside several units within departments.
3. Several organizations use public relations consultant, while other use internal public relations that has been provided by the organizations. In addition, several organizations use both internal and external public relations.

A good placement of public relations in organization's structure can be beneficial since it can support an organization performance, especially when the organization is varied and is demanded to be able to be flexible from the lower order to the top management. That an improper placement of public relations can result at overlap role with other division within the organization [5]. Visually or in an organization structure, public relations has to be placed at high order within an organization.



**Picture 1. The Ideal Structure of public relations in the organization [5]**

The explanation supports a theory that the role and function of public relations is determined by management perception which is considered dominant within an organization. A public relations specialist usually does not have freedom to act professionally unless he/she belong to a dominant coalition which has authority to include social responsibility elements, public understanding, or two-way communication. Only by this way, it is easier to see the contribution of public relations to the effectiveness of the organization.

In accordance to its urgency, this study is conducted based on several assumptions, including an assumption which states that the function of public relations can be optimized if it is place right under the top management or decision-maker in an organization. Structurally, public relations is an integrated part that cannot be separated from an organization. The function of public relations will be best when it is placed directly under the highest order of an organization [6].

Another assumption is taken from a statement which state that public relations officers, if they are well-acknowledged, should be given a top position [7]. From the afore-mentioned statement, it can be said that public relations officers are considered essential part of an organization as decision-maker. It means that they are involved in the decision-making by the dominant coalition. Furthermore, it implies that public relations specialists must be engaged because, as what Dozier & Broom have stated, the exclusion of this division from decision-making processes will limit its practice so that public relations will become a low level support. As manager, public relations consists of three aspects: expert prescribers that act as consultant to describe the problems, to give several solutions, and to supervise the process of problem solving; communication facilitators that function as boundary spanning which connects an organization and public using two-way communication; problem-solving facilitator that become a partner of senior managers to identify as well as to solve problems [8].

The other assumption in this study is related to the position of public relations in an institutional structure. That public relations will be effective if it becomes a unit which is separated from other divisions [9]. This explanation shows that the role of public relations is more than just communicating. Public relations plays a managerial function which is related to an effort of building mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and its public [10]

*"The management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depend"*

Based on the background and several afore-mentioned assumptions, the researcher studies *The Analysis of Public relations Position within an Organization Structure and The Implication of its Role and Function in Various Organization*. The researcher uses four different organizations, Persada Hospital which represents a hospital, Santika Hotel which

represents a hotel, Jatim Park Group which represents amusement park, and Widyagama University which represents educational institution. The criterion used in choosing the organization in this study is that the organization has to have public relations division or other unit which has similar function.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### ***Organization Structure***

Organization structure is defined as a formal framework which divides task allocation, task grouping, and task coordination [11]. Hasibuan theory of organization structure implies that there are five general structures within an organization, namely: a) Line organization, b) Line and Staff organization, c) Functional organization, d) Line, Staff, and Functional organization, and e) committee organization [12].

### ***The position of public relations within an organization structure***

Structurally, public relations is considered as an integrated part of an organization which cannot be separated [13]. Public relations is unit which are directly connected to top management since they will gain their best when they become a part of top management officials (equals to top management). In line with the previous explanation, that public relations has to be placed at the highest level of an organization which is equal to directors who have responsibility to president director [14].

That one of the indicators of public relations' professionalism is autonomy so that they are able to interact with both internal and external environments of an organization which is believed to lead to better and innovative ideas [15]. By these ideas, it is expected that public relations is able to support effective decision making so that the organization can achieve its goals and improve service to public. This can happen when an organization trusts public relations to handle managerial role within top management. Also, it can happen when public relations is included in decision-making processes within an organization.

Shows ideal position of public relations, namely: (1) Forming public relations unit to control information and news as well as cooperate with pers. (2) Making the position of public relations to be equal to top management and decision maker i.e. Executive Assistant President Director. (3) Having authority to perform its function and role as staff that is responsible to administer communication [16].

### ***The role and function of public relations within organization structure***

Structurally, public relations is an integrated unit within institution or organization, it means that public relations cannot be separated from the function of an institution or organization. Childs argues that the basic function of public relations is not only to convey organization point of view or public behavior, but also to make reconciliation or adaptation to public need or organization's program that has social importance. In this case, public relations helps organization to adapt to the environment where the organization is managed [17].

Classify public relations as follows:

#### **1. Communication Technician Role**

Public relations in this area has skills in journalistic communication, such as writing, editing, producing audio visual, creating graphic, and producing information which will be used to carry out its program. These kinds of public relations usually write news, write feature, write newsletter, write and improving organization website, and handle the mass media.

#### **2. Communication Manager Role**

Public relations systematically plans and controls programs within an organization. It also gives suggestion to management or dominant coalition within a company. In addition, it should be involved in decision-making, especially in communication area. Public relations should directly be engaged in all aspects of decision-making. It also have to continuously conduct research and making working evaluation. Management unit should give authority to public relations officers to handle all programs which have connection to its area.

There are three sub-roles of Communication Manager Role, namely:

- a. Expert Prescriber which has ability to define problems, construct plans, make programs, and be responsible to the planned programs. This type of public relations is known as informed practitioner.
- b. Communication facilitator which has responsibility to maintain two-way communication quality and quantity between an organization and its public. This kind of public relations plays as interpreter and mediator which have to erase communication boundaries. It is expected that by providing needed information for organization management and its public or company, the decision-making process will be beneficial for both parties.

- c. Problem-solving process facilitator which help organization management to find solution for communication problems and organization relations. This role involves member of other units or department within company or client if the facilitator work for public relations agency. This facilitator also helps planning and implementing public relations programs rationally.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research was carried out in four different places: Persada Hospital, located in Jl. Panji Suroso, Araya Bussiness Centre in Complex Kav. 2-4 Blimbing Malang, Santika Hotel in Jl. Letjen Sutoyo Malang, Jatim Park group in Jl. Kartika no.2 Batu, and Widyagama University in Jl. Borobudur no.35 Malang. The technique that is used in informants choosing is purposive sampling technique. This technique selects people based on some particular criteria made specifically for the research purposes (Kriyantono, 2006). The criteria include: (1) the informant has to be a manager/ head of public relations division of an organization that has understanding about the information about the function and roles of the public relations in the organization and (2) the particular public relations officer should be within the organization structure. The method which is used in this research is comparative qualitative research method which compares between the real situations in the company with the researcher's suggestion. The data collection technique used in the research include: (1) in depth interview, (2) documentation, and (3) observation.

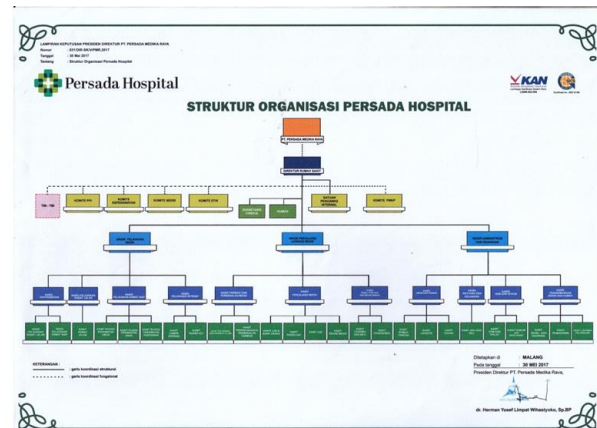
## DISCUSSION

This part describes the analysis of the position of public relations in the organizational structure of Persada Hospital, Santika Hotel, Jatim park Group, and Widyagama University organizations.

### THE ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

The organization structure of Persada Hospital is included in Line and Staff organization. The unity of command is still held here and the authority distribution is carried out vertically from the highest leader to the lower one. The top management is rightful to set a policy, discretion, and realizing the company's goals. It can be seen from when the public relations officer gives knowledge of how important it is for public relations to be independent and apart from other divisions because there are many service standards that needs public relations. Thus, the

leader decides that the public relations of Persada Hospital should be in its own division and apart from other division and named public relations division which has 2 staffs.



**Picture 2. Organization structure of Persada Hospital**

Santika Hotel uses functional organization structure. In this type of organization, work divisions are fully reckoned. The work is divided based on a thorough specialization and each official only undertake one particular job based on his/her specialization. The characteristics of functional organization are as follow:

1. Tasks distribution can be differentiated clearly. In this organization, the distribution of one division to another is very clear, corresponding to the tasks distribution. Take for example, there is a clear borderline between the tasks of front office, housekeeping, and food and beverages divisions.
2. Subordinates will receive orders from several supervisors. When a public relations officer is structurally under the control of sales manager, his/her job is not only receiving orders under the control of sales manager, but also from general manager.
3. Official's placement is based on his/her specialization. In the organization, each division's placement is based on each skill. Take for example, a chef in a hotel is placed based on his/her specialization field and cannot be replaced by any other officials.
4. Thorough coordination is usually needed only in upper level. To coordinate about certain policy, it is only completed in upper level; in example in coordinating New Year Eve yearly event.

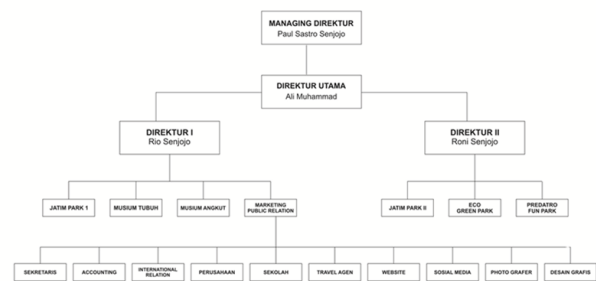


**Picture 3. Organization structure of Santika Hotel Malang**

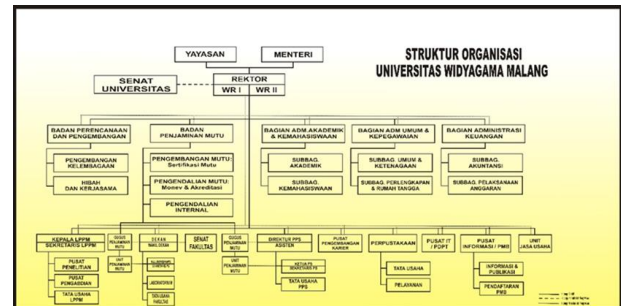
Jatim Park Group applies product based organization structure. In the organization, separated units are created to be responsible for different public products. It can be seen from the separated organization structure between one ride with the others like between Jatim Park 1, Museum Tubuh, Museum Angkut, Jatim Park 2, Eco Green Park, and Public Predator Fun Park. Each has its own operational manager who will report to their own director.

However, it is different for the sales and marketing division. At first, each ride has its own sales and marketing division. Yet, when it was acknowledged that the visitors were not equally distributed, the divisions are merged into one unit which is marketing public relations unit. It is hoped to improve all rides with different characteristics that every ride has, and thus, results in different visitor segmentation.

On the other hand, Widyagama University applies line and staff organization structure. It is basically a combination of line and functional organization. The unity of command is still strongly held and the authority distribution happens vertically from the top management to the lower one. The top management has the right to take decisions, policy, and realize the company's goals. In Widyagama University, the top management is a rector who has the rights to decide policies such as the ability to choose the promotional media of the company-profile. The tasks of the staffs are to give assistance, suggestions, data, information, and service to the leader to be used as consideration in creating policy and its followings. In this case, the university's senate is included in line and staff organizational structure.



**Picture 4. Organization structure of Jatim Park Group**



**Picture 5. Organization structure of Widyagama University**

### Table 1. Organization structure in Various Organizations

Persada Hospital	Santika Hotel	Jatim Park Group	Widyagama University
Line and Staff Organization	Functional Organization	Product Organization	Line and Staff Organization

## THE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends [7]. Public relations involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive of public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest, help management to abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends, and uses research and sound and ethical communication techniques as the principal tools [7].

Structurally, public relations in Persada Hospital is directly under the highest leader (the hospital's director) and has access straight to the leader. The tasks are carrying out the external and internal public relations tasks. The external public relations's tasks include: maintaining relationship



with media, establishing communication with communities connected to healthcare such as Healthy Heart Community (*Komunitas jantung Sehat*), maintaining the relationship with the surrounding citizens, holding healthcare education, etc. The internal public relations's tasks covers handling complains (direct/ indirect patient complain), employers' welfare, etc. Its implication toward the work of the public relations divisions which is directly under the authority of the highest organization leader is the broader space it has to run the program. Moreover, the knowledge of public relations and organization's product makes the leader trusts it, which results in its ability to run the public relations role as following: Communication Technician Role, Communication Manager Role (Expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem solving process facilitator).

On the other hand, Santika Hotel is under a sales manager division named Public relations Officer (PRO) which has to go through sales manager before a policy is passed to the top management of the organization (the General Manager). The public relations's tasks are mostly communication technician. The task covers handling media promotional needs (either mass, online, radio, or TV) only after the GM thinks that it is necessary to change his/her internal needs like for example the needed design inside the hotel is included as the main job (graphic designer). Its implication to the work of public relations officer under sales manager division is the public relations does not have a broad space, must coordinate with sales and management division before finally to the general manager. Hence, it affects its role, which is communication technician role. However, this position is regarded as enough by PRO, looking at the numbers of the rooms available in the hotel, convention hall, as well as the total area of the hotel which is set as a standard to put PRO in communication technician role.

The public relations in Jatim Park Group is directly under the director 1 and is an independent division called marketing public relations, that it has direct access to the leader. Its tasks include; maintaining relationship with media and build the images of that the recreational spots, like Jatim Park 1, Jatim Park 2, Museum Angkut, Predator Fun Park, Museum Tubuh, and Eco Green Park, belong to one group which need to be promoted in one package and have to attract fairly distributed visitors to each of them. The implication is public relations must become a marketing person for several years first before finally have a good understanding of the product. This

affect the position of public relations which is under director 1 in a way that public relations has a broader space. Although based on formal knowledge about public relations, it is regarded as lacking, but learning from the experience and the surrounding people makes the public relations marketing work optimum.

**Table 2. The Roles and Functions of Public Relations in Various Organizations**

	PERSADA HOSPITAL	HOTEL SANTIKA	JATIM PARK GROUP	UNIVERSI TAS WIDYAGA MA
The role of public relations based on Broom & Smith (1979)	communication technician role, expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem solving process facilitator	communication technician	communication technician role, expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem solving process facilitator	communication technician role and communication facilitator
Technical function of public relations	It's not done alone, because it already has 2 staff. Stay in coordination with the staff concerned	Still doing technical PR. Like making a design.	The function has been technically done by its 10 staff.	Have 1 staff for doing technical work, such as making press release, photo activity etc.

Public relations in Widyagama University is structurally a technical implementation unit which is directly under the highest leader of the university (rector) named Student Admission Information Center (*Pusat Informasi Penerimaan Mahasiswa Baru*). The technical implementation unit, based on the organization's document and working arrangement, is a supporting element that is needed for the administration in the university environment. Structurally, its task is as the information center, but it mostly handles the institute's protocol like conditioning any leaders' need and handling the media. The implication of when a public relations is under the highest leader directly is it has broader space to accomplish its tasks. However, with the limited knowledge of public relations roles and functions, the task is limited to only as a communication technician and communication facilitator.

### **THE POSITION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND ITS IMPLICATION IN THE ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE**

It can be seen from the organizational structure that Persada Hospital's, Jatim Park Group's, and Widayagama University's public relations are right under the highest order. On the other hand, Santika Hotel's is under the division of sales manager. The public relations of Persada Hospital is structurally under the hospital's director. The organization supports this by the existence of public relations. This can be seen from the separation of public relations from another division although previously it belonged to the business development division. Moreover, public relations is given a flexible space by the organization for several reasons;

#### **1. Leader's trust**

In Persada Hospital, Leader's trust function is to create an information sharing and collaboration atmosphere. When public relations believes that the ideas and information that it expresses will be appreciated, its initiation and creativity will expand. A trusting leader will undoubtedly delegate his/her tasks and authority. Take for example, in creating the working plot report and the follow up of customer's complain.

#### **2. Personal Trust**

The public relations in Persada hospital is believed by the organization to achieve the company's goals because it has special skill:

##### **a. Creator:**

It means having creativity in generating new concepts, ideas, or thoughts. The example is when there is a patient having a birthday; the public relations gives a surprise birthday cake which is sent directly by the public relations officers. If the patient is female, the male staff will bring the cake and for the male patient, Mrs. Kitty as the head of public relations will deliver the surprise. It is made to give a comfortable feeling with the hospital and is hoped to be a memorable moment for the patient.

##### **b. Conceptor**

It means having the skill of a conceptor. In this case, it develops the public relations programs and other working programs. Take for instance, when the public relations discovers that the highest AIDS rate in Malang is in Blimbing, where the hospital is located, it will hold a

counsel about AIDS awareness in the PKK office Malang.

#### **c. Mediator**

It means having the skill of communication mastery, oral or written, in expressing messages or information from the organization to the public. Mrs. Kitty has oral and written communication skill. It is seen from the written data about the customers' report, visitor numbers' data, etc. Moreover, her oral communication skill is also shown several times when she acted as a public presenter in presenting about service excellent in internal use for the employee, presenter in community, etc.

It is different from the public relations in Santika Hotel which is under the authority of Sales manager division whose task as a communication technician includes: creating a map direction to a room, designing a flyer/ brochure, etc. Based on the interview with the public relations officer of Santika Hotel, this kind of placement is caused by the moderate organization scope which includes not more than 120 rooms. Thus, it affects the leader's decision, that the public relations in Santika Hotel which is under the Sales Manager division is regarded appropriate.

On the other hand, in Jatim Park Group, the public relations position is under the Director 1. Here, the highest leader is a managing director, under the Main Director. After the main director, there are two other directors whom each are responsible for several rides. Jatim Park 1, Museum Tubuh, Museum Angkut, and Public relationsedator Fun Park are under the authority of director 2. The head of the marketing staff, Mrs. Titi has 10 staffs divided into several work tasking: secretary, accounting, international relations, company, school, website travel agent, social media, photographer, and graphic designer. The 10 staffs are the result of the public relations marketing's suggestion to help the public relations's job in elevating the Jatim Park Group brand image. However, not every program is accepted and agreed by the leader because of the limited fund and leader's trust.

**Table 3. The Position of public relations and its implication in the organization structure.**

	<b>PERSADA HOSPITAL</b>	<b>HOTEL SANTIKA</b>	<b>JATIM PARK GROUP</b>	<b>UNIVERSI TAS WIDYAGAMA</b>
Position of Public Relations	Under the president director	Under Sales Manager division	Under the president director	under the president director
The implications	Everything that becomes a public relations program is fully supported by the top management and management. Supported by Trust Leadership and personal trust public relations.	Public relations activity is limited. Only doing technical activities. And everything policy has to go through his manager first. After that to the highest position (General Manager)	Public relations can do the job maximum with 10 staff. However Not all programs can be accepted and approved by the leaders. Due to budget constraints and leaders' beliefs.	Even in strategic position. Some public relations activities have not been implemented yet. Due to limited knowledge and other human resources. And staff needs to be added, so it can do the job with focus.

In The Widyagama University, the division that performs the role and function of public relations is student admission information center (*Pusat Informasi Penerimaan Mahasiswa Baru*) which is directly under the highest leader of the University (rector). The existence of the strategic student information center is a form of the leader's trust to a personal public relations officer named Mrs. Rita. She has been serving as the head of agriculture department for two periods. The position holds her back from doing the public relations activity and makes protocols and handles the leader's schedule. Mrs. Rita said that it makes her job become not focus and she must recruit more staff. She has 1 staff now

whose job is to undergo the public relations activity technically which include; communicating with medias. It is started with the student admission information center communicating with the media first. Moreover, the jobs also cover maintaining website, events documentation, maintaining social media (Instagram and Facebook) which are centered in the student admission information center. The objectives of a public relations in a university covers: 1) improvement of educational awareness and prevent misinformation and rumors, (2) build public's support in funding, (3) achieve public's acceptance and cooperation in maintaining educational changes, and (4) establish cooperation with media.

## CONCLUSION

Every company places public relations in different positions between one to other company with several reasons. The result of this research shows the position of public relations in Persada Hospital which is directly under the director of the hospital and takes a role as a communication technician, expert prescriber, communication facilitator, and problem solving process facilitator. In Santika Hotel, the public relations's role, which is under the sales manager division, is as a communication technician, proven by the many bureaucracy stages that have to be undertaken in carrying out its role. In Jatim Park Group, the position of public relations is directly under director 1 and acts as communication technician role, expert prescriber, communication facilitator, and problem solving process facilitator. For Widyagama University, the position of public relations is directly under the highest leader and acts as communication technician and communication facilitator. The public relations's works in this research is regarded as positive and appropriate with the work portion if it is reflected to its role and position.

The four organizations above show that to administer information and communication to the internal or external public of an organization needs a division that supports every policy. Every public relations can be applied based on the characteristics of the organization or the public related cases that the company has. If the internal and external publics are broad and has complicated problems and previously undetected, expert prescriber's role is needed. The organization gives full authority to the public relations to find out and solve the problem, and be responsible to the matters. On the other hand, the less the public problem of an organization, the public relations's role as a communication technician is technically shifted



to a public relations role. A company's public relations's function and roles as a source of information need to be acknowledged in the organizational structure and the human resource. Goal achievement and public relations target will be achieved if the public relations's activity is organized well through a professionally handled public relations management.

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