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Reputation in Public Relations

Building and maintaining reputation is perhaps the most crucial component of public relations. Every company and organization must uphold an excellent reputation in order to be successful, which primarily includes gaining trust and respect from a large public. More specifically, reputation is an intangible asset that allows a company to manage its expectations and differentiate itself. Every aspect of a company, including its behaviors, relationships, financial values, and ethics, comprise its overall reputation. It has even been proven that customers are willing to pay more for a product sold by a company with a good reputation, allowing them to outperform other companies. Therefore, it is vital for public relations practitioners to manage a company’s reputation by paying close attention to its relationship with the public.

Since public relations practitioners are the social conscience of a company or organization, it is crucial to reiterate to colleagues that there is an ethical responsibility to the public that must always be taken seriously. This is where the role of Corporate Social Responsibility, a philosophy that companies must focus on, comes into play. CSR involves two basic responsibilities that all organizations must abide by: legal and economic. Companies aiming to better their reputation focus on social and ethical responsibilities in addition to these two. The goal of CSR is to ensure that all companies follow legal and economic guidelines, while also making ethical choices and positively contributing to the community. It is absolutely necessary for companies to follow all four of these principles in order to establish a good reputation. Many customers take all of these components into account when deciding which products to buy and which companies to trust. Reputation has a bigger impact on a company’s success than many people realize, which is why it is so important for public relations practitioners to focus on building and maintaining the best possible reputations.

One worldwide company that is often on the radar for the scandals and controversies that affect its reputation is Walmart. Walmart is a huge company with very impressive statistics, such as its employment of over 2.3 million people worldwide and its approximated 260 million customers served each week. Its affordable low prices and impressive global footprint tend to make up for the fact that the company’s reputation has occasionally been negatively affected by various controversies. Walmart is often questioned about its ethical values, usually pertaining to the treatment of its employees. The lobbying group Walmart Watch has gotten ample media coverage for its investigation and efforts to expose the company for its supposed mistreatment of its employees. Low wages, lack of room for growth and promotion, and lack of benefits for most employees due to the minimal amount of full-time positions granted are just a few of the rumored unethical practices being investigated by Walmart Watch. However, even with the media attention this lobbying group receives, Walmart still manages to maintain its reputation as a successful, dependable, worldwide company that offers convenience, variety, and affordable low prices to its customers.

Walmart’s strong, persistent marketing is a key component of the success and good reputation it currently has. The strategies and tactics Walmart uses to promote the good and overshadow the negative can be attributed to the company’s public relations professionals. The slogan that immediately comes into mind when the name “Walmart” is brought up it is “Save Money. Live Better.” This statement has been branded into every aspect of the company, from its commercials to its plastic bags complete with the iconic smiley face. Creating a positive, memorable brand for the company is the most effective way to build its reputation. When people think of Walmart, they are reminded of the low, affordable prices that the store offers, making them want to shop there. This strong, positive brand image helps protect Walmart from controversies that challenge its reputation. As long as the public associates Walmart with its brand image of low prices, saving money, living better, and of course, the iconic smiley face, they are more likely to ignore any negative media attention the company receives. In this case, Walmart’s public relations practitioners are successful in branding the company’s image and developing its marketing strategies.

Walmart has many other strengths when it comes to maintaining a good reputation, such as their impressive statistics, recognizable brand image, affordable low prices, market penetration, and global footprint. While these aspects of the company cannot directly be controlled by public relations practitioners, they are strategically revealed to the public through marketing. Through social media, companies can pick and choose what they want to share with the public, allowing them to highlight their strengths and hide their weaknesses. This strategic marketing allows Walmart to maintain a good reputation that is recognized by the public. They are led to have high expectations of the company based on its highly publicized communications and actions.

On the other hand, Walmart does have weaknesses that the company’s public relations practitioners must work with. The main concern is the lobbying group Walmart Watch, who is sometimes given media attention for their efforts to expose Walmart for misconduct. However, Walmart’s strong reputation as a trustworthy company outshines this group's accusations. Although there has been some media coverage about Walmart’s employees going on strike or complaining about their working conditions, people still continue to shop there. Walmart is the largest revenue company in the world, proving that it has an excellent reputation and can outperform its competitors.

Much of Walmart’s success as a company can be attributed to its public relations practitioners, as they know how to recognize a good opportunity and take advantage of it. Walmart’s most effective marketing strategies stem from opportunities to better the company’s reputation, such as capitalizing on quantifiable data, giving back to the community, and utilizing different social media outlets. By capitalizing on quantifiable data, such as Walmart’s impressive statistics about employment, revenue, and global footprint, public relations practitioners show the public how massive and successful the company is. This helps build its reputation, which in turn makes the public trust and respect the company, and of course, want to shop there. Additionally, Walmart is often celebrated for giving back to the community, whether it be for raising money for various charities, or simply offering low prices on everyday products so that its customers can save money while still getting the quality they want. Walmart is advertised on all social media outlets, helping them reach a wide audience of all ages, ethnicities, genders, and social classes. By optimizing on marketing opportunities, Walmart has truly built and maintained an excellent reputation and a strong relationship with the public.

Despite its threats, like Walmart Watch, competitors, and dissatisfied employees, Walmart has effectively maintained its reputation as a strong, successful company. Its effective public relations strategies play a big part in the company’s reputation management. By placing emphasis on the good and taking advantage of every opportunity, Walmart is able to overshadow any negative media attention it receives and dispute many threats. While it is known that Walmart is not truly a perfect company, its good reputation helps it remain a strong leader in the global market.

Works Cited

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