



Public Relations

Whether it is an agency of the government or a company braving the winds of the market-place, many organisations are concerned about the public's perception of them and their activities. Public relations is increasingly recognised as a crucial department of any organisation.

Public relations not only deals with building and promoting the external image of an organisation. It also emphasises on internal coordination, informing the organisation's employees about its aims and objectives and how it is achieving them, and organising different activities to create a sense of belonging among the employees.



POSITIONS

In a public relations consultancy, a fresh graduate is usually appointed as assistant account executive. A consultancy is hired by a company to improve various communication aspects of the company's activities. Services may also include improving human resources communications and sales promotions, and most commonly, planning media relations and producing promotional material ranging from copywriting to the production of multimedia advertising.

An assistant account executive is usually assigned specific tasks as part of an overall campaign for a particular client. Tasks may include assisting the account executive to plan and carry out exhibitions, demonstrations and media conferences, and to keep in contact with clients on a day-to-day basis. Producing, press releases, scripts and translations of documents is also part of the job, as well as monitoring the work of freelance writers and designers.

The government also provides opportunities for graduates in the field of public relations. The Information Services Department (ISD) serves as the government's public relations consultant, publisher, advertising agent and news agency. It has four divisions, namely, Local Public Relations, Publicity and Promotions, Public Relations Outside Hong Kong and Administration.



The Local Public Relations Division, which consists of three subdivisions, is responsible for issuing all government announcements, keeping the Government informed of the public's opinion, and working closely with the ISD on information, public relations and publicity aspects of the work of the bureau and its departments.

The Publicity and Promotions Division is responsible for government publications, promotional campaigns, advertisements, creative and design work, and government photography. The division has three subdivisions, namely, Local Promotions, Creative and International Promotions.

The Public Relations Units Outside Hong Kong, which consists of three subdivisions, is tasked with assisting the government's publicity efforts overseas, producing and distributing promotional materials worldwide, liaising with other information personnel abroad and running the department's sponsored VIP visitors programme.

A graduate normally starts as assistant information officer regardless of the division. Assistant information officers have the opportunity to be promoted to information officers.

EDUCATION & REQUIREMENTS

Public relations can take many forms and its practitioners draw on a variety of skills and experience. There is no one discipline that qualifies a graduate for public relations. However, excellent writing and communication skills are required; graduates with a degree in communications may have an advantage.

Good presentation skills are a great asset, as is a general interest in and an awareness of public affairs. A sociable, even extroverted character is essential for working in the public relations field, particularly in the hotel industry, as interaction at social functions is a regular part of the job.



SALARY & BENEFITS

The starting salary of a graduate is usually around \$8,000-\$10,000. Upon promotion to account manager, the salary increases to \$15,000-\$20,000.

FURTHER TRAINING

Sometimes on-the-job training is provided at the assistant account executive level. Some companies even sponsor their employees to attend part-time courses in public relations as part of their career development.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Hong Kong Public Relations Professionals' Association Limited is an independent body comprising public relations practitioners in Hong Kong. The association can be contacted at 8112-0028 or email to enquiry@prpa.com.hk.