
The Public Relations Program
of the
Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company

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PITTSBURGH PLATE GLASS COMPANY

The public relations program of the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company was organized in 1939. Its first director was Richard L. Gridley.

In 1944, Guy J. Berghoff became director of public relations and, in 1947, he was named to administer all company public relations and advertising activities. The title given him was Director of Public Relations and Advertising. When it was originally set up, the public relations function was rather limited in scope. Since 1944 the program has expanded into the many fields which are recognized today as important areas for public relations work.

In 1954, Mr. Berghoff was named Assistant to the Vice President, Merchandising Division, and Michael J. Batenburg, then General Advertising Manager, assumed Mr. Berghoff's duties with the title of Director of Information Services. The functions of the Information Services Department consist of (1) Advertising Activities -- Paint Advertising; Glass Advertising; Chemical and Fiber Glass Advertising; Stores Advertising; (2) Publications; and (3) Public Relations.

ORGANIZATION

The public relations activities of the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company are a staff function which serve not only the parent company, but also several wholly-owned subsidiaries, including Columbia-Southern Chemical Corporation. Responsibility for results is vested in the director of information services, who in turn reports to the president of the company.

The director of information services divides his responsibility into three major divisions. One is advertising, which is subdivided into five staff responsibilities: (1) advertising manager -- chemical and fiber

glass; (2) manager -- glass advertising; (3) manager -- stores advertising; (4) advertising manager -- paint and brush division; and (5) manager of advertising production. The second of the three principal responsibilities is public relations, which is subdivided into (a) the general press section; (b) the special activities section; and (c) the product publicity section.

The third division -- publications -- is directed by the manager of publications, who has reporting to him (1) a supervisor - information racks and editor of Pittsburgh Plate Glass Products; (2) a managing editor of plant newspapers; (3) an associate editor of Pittsburgh People; and (4) a women's editor. Really another subdivision is the photographic section, which reports directly to the director of information services, and whose services are also used by the public relations and advertising departments.

This method of organization coordinates advertising, public relations, community relations, and publications under one responsible head, and thus permits a ready liaison and quick decisions when borderline cases arise between advertising and public relations, and public relations and publications.

Since this study concerns itself only with the public relations activities of the company, and since the public relations department is a separate responsibility from advertising or publications, only the public relations aspects of the company's activities will be discussed.

As mentioned above, public relations is divided into three major divisions -- product publicity, special activities, and general press -- and one related function, community relations. The product publicity section is primarily concerned with the preparation of news articles, broad press releases, semi-technical press material and other

information that deals with products and their use. This activity covers all of the products produced by the company, as well as those produced by Columbia-Southern. Close cooperation exists with building, architectural, consumer and trade publications, as well as with a substantial number of free-lance writers and newspapers.

The general press section is concerned mainly with informative materials about company finances, new plant installations, financial releases, personnel appointments, plant community newspapers, and the business and financial press in general.

The special activities section covers a group of miscellaneous activities. The company's annual report is produced by this section, and this section also provides a lot of informative material that deals with special groups, such as schools, women's clubs, and technical associations. Exhibits, brochures for plant or laboratory openings, anniversary booklets for company merchandising branches, and a collection of materials for special displays, are also the responsibility of this section.

1. PRODUCT PUBLICITY¹

The chief of this section is responsible for contacts with consumer publications, the technical and trade press, and the scientific and industrial press.

Pittsburgh Plate Glass differentiates between product publicity and general press. Product publicity is concerned with the commercial aspects of the company. To illustrate this difference, let us assume that the company contemplates the building of a new plant in a new plant-town area. Preliminary publicity concerning the formulation of plans and such general information as is given to the local press during the

¹R. C. Daley, Chief of Product Publicity Section, Product Publicity

construction of the plant, falls under the responsibility of the general press section. When the plant has been completed, and starts to operate, however, the publicizing of plant activities will fall to the product publicity section, because of the commercial aspects of the plant's production. We must bear in mind that community publicity, however, as it pertains to personnel and non-commercial activities of the plant facility, will remain the responsibility of the general press section. When the plant has been completed and an appropriate ceremony is held to inaugurate operations and introduce the plant to the members of the community, a fourth section of the public relations department comes into play in the guise of the "special activities section," to be discussed later.

Product publicity has many facets. A very interesting one is the section's relationship with the company's research departments. These latter departments of the several company divisions (glass, paint and brush, chemicals, plastics, fiber glass) are constantly devising new methodology and new products for the use of the consuming public. Since the company management will not know fully what consumer demand will develop for a new product, product publicity is one avenue used to acquaint buyers with the product and its actual or potential uses. As a case in point, the glass research department, always alert to the need for advanced planning in the glass industry, developed a new product which it called "bomb glass." Set in a plastic window frame, the glass was fastened at the edges, as is the case in regular glazing operations. Scored diagonals running from corner to corner, and crossing at the center of the pane, were made at the factory before they were mounted in the frame. The blast effect of an explosion, instead of breaking the glass, caused it to separate at the

scored diagonals so that the four triangular pieces of the pane opened out from the center, and thus permitted the blast to blow through the opening without danger of personal injury from flying fragments of window glass. After the blast effect had been spent, the four triangular pieces could be pushed back into position and any adhesive material placed over the center of the window covering the points of the four triangular pieces of window pane could hold the glass in place until the next emergency. Naturally, this offered an excellent item for product publicity. Not too long after the story appeared, a manufacturer of airplane engines who was building a large new factory used this type of explosion window throughout the entire glassed exterior of his buildings.

This illustration shows a special application of product publicity. The research department gets the idea, product development creates the product for sale, and product publicity tells the public about the new development. Sales promotion and the merchandising division are then guided by the public reaction to the product publicity in gauging the practicality of merchandising the new article for general consumption. It might be well to note in passing that Pittsburgh Plate Glass sales promotion and advertising departments do not, in themselves, offer anything to public media other than paid advertising -- product publicity is the responsibility solely of the public relations department.

Another very interesting phase of product publicity is the technical and trade press. Actually, this is sales promotion publicity and its attendant commercial aspects. However, the product publicity section does not feel that its effort is necessarily a sales "pitch." Take, for example, the company's program of "Color Dynamics." There is little doubt that a program of "Color Dynamics" sells paint. In this particular instance, the

Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company is primarily interested in developing a more proper use of color combinations. Again to illustrate, Dr. Arthur Rice, editor of The Nation's Schools magazine, writing in the November, 1953, issue of that magazine, showed the effectiveness of proper color combinations in public schools. Working closely with the research findings developed by The Johns Hopkins University, under a research grant made by Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company, he was able to show that pupils housed in a school building using only green and white wall and ceiling combinations were much more efficient in learning than pupils in schools where the wall and ceiling coverings had become faded and soiled (7.3 per cent scholastic improvement against 3 per cent). In like manner, those schools which had used the proper combination of colors to assure visibility, reduction of glare and harmony of color, were the most efficient of all (up to 33.9 per cent scholastic improvement). Pittsburgh Plate had reprints made of Dr. Rice's article and sent them to all the school maintenance authorities, and to art classes and vocational art classes, throughout the United States.

Pittsburgh Plate Glass promotes "Color Dynamics" whenever this is expedient, although it realizes that often the customer, guided by the recommendations of the company's "Color Dynamics" plan, may not purchase Pittsburgh Paints to carry out the harmonious color scheme he has decided upon. The company feels, however, that the promotion of the proper use of colors is a public service, and that it will receive at least its proportional part of the market. As an added service, the company will survey projects and recommend color combinations, and even go so far as to write specifications without charge.

Another function of the product publicity section is "ghost writing." Many stories appearing in the trade and technical press under the by-line of an author have been written largely in the product publicity

section of the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company, although no credit is given to the company other than credit lines on photographs. There is always the possibility, however, that the reader might arrive at a favorable general impression so that when he reads about color or glass he will think about Pittsburgh Plate Glass and Pittsburgh Plate Glass products.

Free-lance writers, writing in the field of paints and glass, come to the product publicity section for background material. Many times articles are even written by this section, although they eventually appear under the authorship of free-lance writers. Much material developed by this section also appears in "how-to-do-it" booklets. Just recently, a technical article, "What You Should Know About Power Brushing," written by the product publicity section, appeared under the by-line of an author who was not a member of Pittsburgh Plate Glass' family.

These are just a few of the many technical and trade press articles which are "ghost written" by the product publicity section to illustrate the company's philosophy that better service and more thorough education about the product result in a higher standard of living and in more and better sales. The more the company can raise the standard of living by offering pleasantly decorated living conditions and encouraging the proper use of glass in the home, the more it may, in turn, develop sales for Pittsburgh Plate Glass and its competitors. Nevertheless, this is a public service which the product publicity section considers one of its major objectives, for it believes that the company will benefit either directly or indirectly in the final analysis.

One of the interesting highlights of the investigation of the activities of the product publicity section was its method of handling a press conference designed to introduce a new product. Rather than give a

luncheon or dinner with a formal program and speeches, as is so often the method used in press conferences, the product publicity section holds what might be considered a modified open house. The gathering is held, for example, from 2:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon. Cocktails and snacks are available for those who wish them. The new product which is being introduced is, of course, on display. Interested company management and public relations representatives are present to meet the press, and everything is quite informal, since reporters, feature writers and company personnel are divorced from the formality of a programmed meeting. A member of the press can drop in at any time during the three hour period, spend as little or as much time as he wishes, talk to as many of the company officials as he cares to, and "a happy family" atmosphere predominates. Experience has shown that both management and the press like this arrangement very much. Management likes the idea, particularly because it is able to get closer to the working press and thus have an opportunity personally to give management's point of view about the products being shown. The corollary of this has been that management officials respect the press much more when they are able to view at first hand the high caliber of the average reporter and to exercise between management and the working press a fellowship not generally possible in a formal meeting.

Still another phase of product publicity might be termed "defense publicity." Several years ago, when Pittsburgh Plate Glass came out with tinted glass for automobiles, outdoor movie operators believed that the tinted windshield affected adversely the proper viewing of outdoor motion pictures. In like manner, the introduction of paint rollers several years ago to replace bristle brushes in the application of paints for walls and ceilings created an enigma, for Pittsburgh Plate manufactures both brushes and rollers.

A major product publicity job was performed by this section several years ago when Pittsburgh Plate Glass instituted a store modernization program. A number of large transport trailers were equipped with exhibits of model store interiors. These exhibits were so arranged that the viewer could pass through an avenue erected by parking the trailers side by side, and the displays appeared on each side of him. These displays were also portable, so that they could be set up in a hotel lobby or another location when desired. This caravan visited cities in the United States and Canada which had a population of 40,000 or more. Advance publicity emanated from Pittsburgh prior to the caravan's arrival at a specific city or town. Local publicity was prepared in advance by the product publicity section and sent to the manager of the caravan, who in turn gave it to the local Pittsburgh Plate Glass manager or sponsor to be publicized in the local press. If there was no local sponsor, the caravan manager made his own contacts with the local press. This was a very successful enterprise and went a long way in helping to modernize and dress up store exteriors and interiors by the use of proper "Color Dynamics" and glass.

2. PRESS RELATIONS

In Pittsburgh Plate Glass the responsibility for press relations is a divided one. The chief of the general press section, who is located in Pittsburgh, coordinates publicity, but the superintendents or managers of plants, who are located in plant communities throughout the company's manufacturing areas, have the primary responsibility for local press relations. As discussed under the community relations section, many plant managers have staff representatives responsible to them for expediting both community relations and publicity. As a rule, and with one exception, Ford

City, he is a full time employee of either the personnel or the industrial relations division of the plant, and divides his time between his regular vocation and his press and community relations activities. At Ford City there is a full-time community relations representative who devotes all of his time to his work as a liaison between the plant and the community.

In dealing with the local press, the resident manager is usually the spokesman for the company. He is free to publicize any plant or community activities that he feels are worthy of public interest. He is curtailed in only two fields, those of finance and labor relations. Corporation policy does not permit the discussion in the local press of the amount of money spent on new facilities or the acquisition of additional facilities, nor does the company attempt to discuss its labor problems at the plant level.

Pittsburgh Plate Glass believes that cooperation with news agencies, local newspapers, and radio and television stations at the plant community level is very desirable. In many of these localities the company is the largest employer and taxpayer. Consequently, the company and its people become a prime source of news for the local press and it is advantageous to keep the community friendly to the plant through this and other media. Experience has shown that people living in a plant community are intensely interested in plant activities, and this interest creates an obligation for the company to keep them informed. An informed public is usually a more understanding public.

a. Community Press Relations Program.² In general, the management representative's primary responsibility is to cooperate with, and make himself readily available to, the local press. Since he will often serve as spokesman for the local management, the representative must promote this

² C. H. Cronin, Chief of General Press Section, Press Relations

relationship wherever possible to assure that both community and plant news will be channelled through him.

As mentioned above, the company's local top management representative (works manager, etc.) is responsible for releasing information about the unit. Company stories are always written in the name of the plant manager when a personality is required, unless the nature of the material dictates that another executive should be the authority. The plant personnel manager may be quoted, for example, in stories relating to schedule changes, resumption of employment after partial shutdowns, etc. However, even in this instance, if the layoff is of a major nature, or if employment is to be substantially increased, the news is of enough interest within the community to be released with the manager as spokesman.

b. Subject Matter for Press Releases. In its community relations manual, the company subdivides company news into two types of publicity:

1. Many types of stories relating to the company and its employees have a local interest and are newsworthy. Some typical examples that can be prepared for release with approval of the works managers are:

Local personnel changes

Efforts made to alleviate a civic annoyance (smoke, fumes)

Awards made for employee suggestions

Pittsburgh Plate Glass as a good place to work (several employees from one family, etc.)

Safety precautions (Theme: Employees are safer at Pittsburgh Plate Glass than at home)

Safety records and achievements

Payroll and employment facts and figures

Company's contributions to welfare of community

Support for community projects (hospitals, Red Cross, Community Chest, schools, etc.)

Employment opportunities for new employees

Human interest stories about employees

Company or plant anniversary

Civic or community anniversary or celebration

2. There are some subjects that may have company-wide or nation-wide significance:

New facilities, plant expansion

New equipment and purposes served

Long-range plant employment or business forecast

Research activities and new products (normally these subjects are developed in the public relations department and made available for release in plant cities through the public relations department at the general office)

Local taxes paid by company

Labor contracts or labor disputes

Before local release, these are to be checked with the public relations office in Pittsburgh, which will welcome receiving the information for possible development as a company-wide release.

c. General Press Section. The work of this section is subdivided into two categories, general press and community press. The general press section, located in Pittsburgh, is the responsibility of the "chief of the general press section." He is responsible for collecting news from corporate, legal and industrial divisions of the company to assure that anything of a newsworthy nature originating

with these divisions gets its proper preparation and transmittal to selected national media. A release of this nature would go not only to the large metropolitan dailies, such as the Pittsburgh daily press, but to wire services and plant city newspapers as well.

The chief of this section is also responsible for aiding local plant managers in formulating good press relations. In order that this aid might be uniform, the company's community relations manual has a section on the community press. This section, which discusses company policy in some detail, contains instructions for preparing news releases. Numerous typical releases on anniversaries, work reduction, awards, retirements, safety records, appointments, and expansion of facilities are also included as guides for the local preparation of news releases.

In general, it is the responsibility of the community relations representative to promote local news and to see that adequate publicity is given to local occurrences. However, should a major event take place, and although it may be one of only local interest, the chief of the general press section is immediately called on to direct the handling of the news. Such an occasion may be a local strike, a plant fatality, an explosion or fire which inflicts major damage, or any occasion involving an event which might eventually prove of more than local interest. If public interest is high enough, the chief of the general press section may move his headquarters temporarily from Pittsburgh to the point of action.

Many of the routine duties performed in Pittsburgh consist of announcing personnel appointments, publicizing business and financial reports, obtaining news coverage for speeches made by company executives, and handling news items originating in the legal, industrial relations, and labor relations departments. Plant-town newspapers are received from major plant communities

of the company, and these papers are clipped for company news. There are also contracts with four national clipping services to assure that the general press section is constantly informed of the press conditions in those areas not covered by plant-town newspapers.

When one realizes the complexities and the many ramifications of administering such a diversified company as Pittsburgh Plate Glass, the proper handling of news appears to be a mammoth undertaking. The company has over two-hundred merchandising branches located from coast to coast throughout the United States. Its 30,000 employees are divided roughly into five classifications -- 40 per cent with glass, approximately 12 per cent each with chemicals (Columbia-Southern) and paints, 3 per cent with fiber glass, and the remainder in merchandising, cement, and the general office. With a distribution such as this, it is readily understandable why the responsibility for press relations has been placed in the hands of the community top management representative rather than in the Pittsburgh office.

3. SPECIAL ACTIVITIES³

The principal objective of the special activities section is to help create a better understanding of the company and its policies among employees, shareholders, customers, plant communities, and the general public, as well as to help stimulate an interest in, and the sale of, the company's products. In this connection it is necessary to write copy, select artwork, design layout and supervise production.

In order to perform this function the section must provide professional writing, do necessary research, write editorial copy, and furnish graphic presentation assistance to the company's several divisions and subsidiaries. Recently the glass sales department requested this section to

³L. G. Cooney, Special Activities, Chief of the Special Activities Section.

plan, develop, and produce a semi-technical display of automotive glass for use at an engineering convention, and the merchandising division asked that an employee orientation booklet be written and produced for distribution to employees. Similar responsibilities of this section are:

1. Preparation of special booklets for plant facilities
2. Preparation of speeches for executives
3. Advance planning for fund-raising campaigns
4. Special assistance in joint editorial-advertising promotion of particular products
5. Preparation and production of special graphic materials for answering questions on tariffs and other issues
6. Preparing explanatory materials used in recruiting technical personnel
7. Writing and producing special promotional pieces for special activities, such as company motion pictures
8. Assistance to other departments where writing and production ability and experience are required

Another important responsibility of this section is the "school service program." This involves writing, producing, and distributing instructional aids for teachers and students in grade and high schools. These leaflets deal objectively with the glass and paint industries, and at the same time familiarize an important segment of potential customers with the company's trade names and products. As part of the educational program the head of this section serves as company representative in the Business-Industry Section of the National Science Teachers' Association.

Another section function is the "women's club service program." This involves the supervision and preparation of packaged programs designed to stimulate an interest in, and the sale of, the company's products among women's clubs. A third function is "trade organization work," which involves preparation and distribution of educational and similar material about company products among trade organizations.

Probably one of the more important assignments of the section is the initial preparation and writing of the company's annual report to shareholders. Although the final responsibility for the production of this report rests with the director of information services, this section prepares the rough layout, writes part of the copy, arranges for the selection of photographs and artwork, develops charts, and supervises production from the idea stage to the finished product.

In addition to these major functions there are a number of day-to-day duties important to the public relations department as a whole. These include:

1. The servicing of special requests from textbook, encyclopedia, and reference work authors for editorial and photographic material about the company and its products. Such requests may come directly to the section or be re-routed from other departments of the company.
2. Assembly and collation of sales literature into teaching aids. Through this practice excess literature about the company or its products is put into practical application.
3. Preparation of printed announcements of new branch openings, appointments, special events, etc.

4. Assisting plants and branches in preparing for the holding of business-industry-education days and anniversary programs.
5. Preparation and placement of institutional advertising in magazines and newspapers.
6. Preparation and provision of basic information leaflets.

Still another responsibility of this section lies in establishing liaison with national financial interests. This is accomplished by contact with members of Security Analysts Societies in the preparation of institutional advertisements. From time to time arrangements are made for company officials to appear before these groups. The preparation of the speech to be presented at the time, and the subsequent printing of the talks, are responsibilities of the special activities section. An active list of 1200 brokers, analysts, and other financial people interested in the company and its activities is maintained, and news of the company's operations are regularly mailed to members of this list.

It is not difficult to realize that the chief of the special activities section must be equipped with special writing skills and technical knowledge of graphic presentations, together with a working knowledge of company policies, products, personnel, and operating procedure if he is to perform his function adequately.

4. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Man is a social animal. Besides having a deep and abiding interest in his job, he is also interested in making his community a friendlier and better place in which to live and work. Companies may not be social in the same sense as the individual, but they function only because people make them operate, and because other people either tolerate or encourage their continued existence.

Today, companies cannot operate successfully if they ignore or neglect their social responsibilities in the community. Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company recognizes that it must do more than furnish jobs and pay good wages. The company accepts the social obligations of good citizenship in its plant communities. It prefers to operate where its presence is genuinely wanted, both because of the friendlier feelings involved, and also because of the effects on the welfare of its business.⁴

Pittsburgh Plate's community relations program is the direct responsibility of the plant manager whose plant is located in that community. Each factory or works manager usually has on his staff an individual responsible for the administration and coordination of public relations activities in the plant community. The degree to which this individual participates in the program is dependent on both the size of the plant and the size of the community. In several of the larger plant areas the representative spends a substantial or major part of his time on matters pertaining to good community relations.

Objectives of the Company's Community Relations Program

1. To develop among citizens in all of the plant communities further confidence and understanding of the company and its people.
2. To assure active participation by the company as a "citizen" in community activities and responsibilities.
3. To keep the community informed about company operations and plans that have a bearing on community welfare.
4. To encourage a further understanding among community groups of the workings and operations of the company and of the industry in general, and of what is required for the proper functioning of competitive enterprise.

⁴ Community Relations Manual, Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company, prepared for distribution to company personnel responsible for the administration of good community relations.

5. To deal with employees, providing as satisfactory conditions of work, pay, and steady employment as possible, while still maintaining a successful operation, and to keep employees informed about company plans, policies, and developments.
6. To encourage local management representatives at all levels to become actively interested in political and governmental activities, and to encourage those with the ability to run for political office and accept political appointment.

The public relations department, with headquarters in Pittsburgh, is responsible for coordinating the community relations activities of the various company plants. This office will issue on occasion general guides to help the plants carry out certain parts of the overall program, and will furnish advice and assistance as requested. Any local expense that might be incurred in the administration of this program is chargeable as general plant operating expense. Administrative expenses incurred by the public relations department of the company, however, will not be charged against general works expense.

Although the factory or works manager is Pittsburgh Plate Glass' principal representative and spokesman in the community, he cannot be expected to discharge personally all the responsibility under this program. The company urges all capable personnel from the management group to take an active part in the program. The designation of a community relations assistant is urged. The function of this individual includes the planning and implementation of the program discussed earlier in this paper. Freedom from other responsibilities for the time necessary to perform this work is granted to the individuals selected. Press relations is the responsibility

of the designated individual, although the works manager's name is usually used in releases requiring the name of a plant authority as spokesman. Local news releases are also prepared by, or under the guidance of, this community relations assistant.