

# Discussion on the Teaching Contents and Teaching Methods of Network Public Relations

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**Abstract**—With the endless appearance of the new media, new platforms and new means in the network era, the contradictions between the systematicness and the timeliness of the network public relations become increasingly prominent. It brings both challenges and confusions for teaching the course of network public relations. Based on the definition of the network public relations, this paper teases the links in the work of network public relations. The teaching contents and order of network public relations still shall follow the traditional four-step method of public relations, which includes four parts of the investigation, plan, execution and evaluation. First, the background of public relations will be explicit through the investigation of network public relations. Second, its characteristic with the dominance of new media will be embodied through the plan and execution of network public relations. Last, the feedback and communication will be conducted through the evaluation of public relations, so as to integrate the systematicness and timeliness of the network public relations. The link of teaching methods emphasizes the practicality and centers on each working link of network public relations, applying the courses to practice through the platform of WeChat Official Account.

**Keywords**—*network public relations; the teaching of public relations; four-step method of public relations*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the new media develops so rapidly that the network public relation has become a course which attracts more and more attentions of both teachers and students. The industry and the educational circles gradually realize the network medium increasingly plays a leading role in the work of public relations. In this process, the network new media bring the changes of not only the transmission platform but also the way of thinking. For example, the new product launch event of lip gloss produced by Maybelline New York in 2016 thoroughly breaks through the traditional thinking model of public relations of the offline new product launch event. It integrates the live video streaming by web celebrity, Tmall and celebrities, striding the journalist that is once the most important spreading path in the public relation activities. It directly displays the product and fashion to customers and achieves the win-win brand communication and marketing. Therefore, we can no longer simply regard the network public relations as the way of moving the news release from the

traditional newspapers and magazines to the network media. It is a new form of public relation that is different from the traditional one in the investigation, plan and execution as well as evaluation of public relations.

However, does the appearance of the network public relation really thoroughly overturn the traditional public relations? Is there no need for us to use the systematic working method explored by us through a hundred years, but only pursuing the ever-changing network media environment and hot topics that are regarded as all of the work of public relations? The appearance of network media is shortening the distance between organizations and the masses. It seems spreading information is simpler and simpler for organizations. As a matter of fact, the media contact of the masses is increasingly diversified and fragmented. The traditional era when we transmit information through the release of unified news in public relations has gone forever. The public relation information scattered in the network media environment with varied opinions is easily weakened and disappears. Therefore, both the practice and the teaching of public relations under the network media environment shall be more systematic and integral than ever.

Nowadays, even though the industry and the educational circles have paid more and more attentions to the network public relations, the works about the public relations are few, diversified and shallow. Firstly, the works related to public relations are few. Compared with the numerous and diversified works of the traditional public relations, the works of network public relations are very few, and only several books can be used as teaching materials. Secondly, the main contents of works related to the public relations are disorderly and unsystematic. Some people understand the network public relations as the network crisis public relations. Furthermore, some even regard it as the e-commerce promotion and the internet water army operation, not systematic in the least. Thirdly, the works related to the network public relations are too shallow, mainly introducing the new media instead of further studying the patterns of network public relations. It fails to burst the restraints of the traditional thinking of public relations, treating the network public relations as the traditional public relations with new media. The problems make those contacting the field of network public relations for the first

time confused at the meantime bring great challenges for the teaching of network public relations.

How to seek out the operation rules of network public relations in the complex and changing media environment, and how to find out the systematic way of thinking and integrate the characteristics of the new media in the teaching of network public relations? According to the two years' experience on teaching the public relations, I think it's necessary to return to the four-step method of public relations, namely the investigation, plan, execution and evaluation of public relations, and tease the contents involved in the network public relations.

## II. THE WAYS TO UNDERSTAND THE NETWORK PUBLIC RELATIONS

### A. *Introduction to Network Public Relation*

Different from the traditional network relations, the network public relations refer to a new form of public relations that takes internet as the media and builds images for organizations through the internet and creates a good internal and external environment. The appearance of the network public relations expands the promotion channel, planning ideas, ways of thinking and audiences of the traditional public relations, and gradually becoming the key of the public relation activities. (Qi Xingfa, 2014, p3) The difference between the network public relations and the traditional public relations is not only the change of promotion channel. Although the media still plays an important role in the overall plan of public relations, network public relations have provided the more convenient, more direct and effective ways for you to contact the masses. For example, after the evening party held on Mar.15 annually in the past, the listed companies need to immediately find journalists to announce and call a press conference, in order to apologize or clarify some facts. However, the listed companies on this year's evening party held on Mar.15 choose Sina weibo the most important channel without exception, directly facing the consumers. Media find the information and then write reports. Except for the change of the information spreading channel, it also changes the way of thinking and planning ideas of the whole public relation work. Previously, almost all the enterprises' public relations seriously treat the negative news, but now some enterprises will skate over in a humorous way and they will be forgiven by the consumers faster if the treatment is appropriate. In 2013, the NetEase mail sent a humorous but not defiant announcement on the weibo after the evening party held on Mar.15. The strategy of crisis public relations different from the past is not disgusted but praised by tremendous net citizens. It is beyond the imagination of the traditional public relations but is realized by the network public relations.

### B. *Characteristics of Network Public Relation*

The thinking of the traditional public relations is enslaved to the media, which is regarded as the sole way for organizations to spread the information. Therefore, the main work of people related to the traditional public relations is to make contact with the press release. The most important index to evaluate the effects of public relations is the quantity of

press release issued. However, the network public relations break through the limitation of time and space and shorten the distance between organizations and the public. It brings the form of public relations with stronger interactivity and diversification, and the form of public relation has a lower cost.

The public relation activities taken by organizations on the internet platform are no longer restricted by time and place. In the past, organizations call a press conference to release important information and realize the mass communication through inviting media within the scope of spreading target to the site of activity. However, with the new spreading forms such as the live video streaming and BBS public relations, organizations can deliver information whenever and wherever possible. It makes the network public relations freer and the transmission more rapid and extensive and has a higher requirement for the transmission efficiency of organizations. The bi-directional interaction of the network public relations is beyond the comparison of the traditional public relations. The closer propagation distance makes it possible for the timely interaction between organizations and the public. Nowadays, the official weibo of MIUI has been able to realize the communication with the audiences in the after-sales service and technology consulting. The limits among the public relations, service and marketing become increasingly vague. The diversified transmission platform of network public relations brings the abundant forms of network public relations. Organizations adopt different thinking and transmission modes of public relations according to the network. At the meantime, the brand information will be transmitted more precisely. One of the characteristics of the network public relations is the lower cost than the traditional public relations. The source of the cost advantage is the rich creativity and possibility of the internet platform, which provides the low-cost transmission platform for organizations ceaselessly.

The network public relations have different transmission platforms from the traditional public relations fundamentally, but bring the totally different way of thinking and planning way and effects of public relations.

## III. DISCUSSION ON THE TEACHING CONTENTS AND SEQUENCE ARRANGEMENT OF THE NETWORK PUBLIC RELATIONS

### A. *Investigation of Network Public Relations*

As the first step in the four-step method of public relations, the investigation of network public relation is the foundation of the successful public relation planning and provides the scientific basis for organizations to formulate the strategies of network public relations. The contents of the investigation of network public relations are different from that of the traditional in the five main aspects. First, the psychology of internet audiences, the habits of net citizens in contacting the media, character trait, aesthetic tastes and cognitive attitudes can be divided and investigated pertinently according to their ages, sex, income and gender orientation. It should be pointed out that the psychological investigation on the groups with specific characteristics is more important and can provide powerful supports for the subsequent public relation planning. Second, it is the information of the main competitors, such as

the product information, sales information and advertising information. Third, it is the policies and regulations. It's necessary to investigate the policies and regulations to ensure the planning is within the scope allowed by policies and regulations. Particularly, the traditional public relations fail to know about the policies and regulations in the network communication, to which the investigation of network public relation shall paid attention. Fourth, it is the analysis on the internal situation of companies or organizations whether the resource status and system construction of them can meet the needs of the planning of network public relations. Generally speaking, the activities of the network public relations are more timely, true and risky, so the investigation on organizations is also indispensable. Finally, it is the investigation on the platform of public relation activities. The platforms of network public relations are diversified and ever-changing, requiring the thorough understanding of people relevant to public relations. For instance, the platforms of live videos at home include the live streaming of reality show, games and sports, aiming at different customer groups and business, so the professionals of public relations must know it very well.

### *B. Planning of Network Public Relations*

In order to let students better understand the logic of the planning of network public relations, the planning of network public relations is divided into the active and the passive public relations in this paper. The active public relations refer to the active activities conducted by organizations to spread the brand information, improve the attitudes of audiences and lead the behaviors of them when no negative information about the organization appears. The forms of active activity of network public relations mainly include: network collection, network investigation, network appraisal, network public benefit, network game and network competition. The activities of network public relations have unique platform building and transmission channel and depend on the network media, so its planning ideas are different from the traditional public relation planning.

The passive public relations refer to the form used by organizations to reduce the adverse effects of negative information and anew establish the good images when negative information about organizations appears, and it's mainly crisis public relations. The network crisis public relations focus on the prevention. Organizations shall establish the detection mechanism of network crisis, such as regularly browse social network sites, web portals, business forum and search keywords related to organizations, timely find out the crises and solve them in the first time. After the network crisis happens, the organizations must rapidly have the initiative of public opinions in hands, such as release the information of problem handling, contact with the media and the leaders that influence the public opinions on the internet. The network crisis public relations actively respond to the negative information, such as find out and control the information source and SEO optimization.

The planning of network public opinions emphasizes the change of thinking in public opinion planning under the new media context. The contents and creativity of the planning

activities as well as the public opinion guidance shall consider the characteristics of network media.

### *C. Transmission of Network Public Relations*

The essence of public relation is the transmission, and the biggest characteristic of network public relations is the change of the communication environment. Therefore, learning the transmission means is the priority among priorities in the course of network public relations. The main transmission means related to the network public relations such as the public relations of search engine, network news, interactive question and answer, BBS, podcast, weibo and WeChat will be elaborated in this part.

The change of network media is very fast. New transmission modes and hot spots appear almost everyday. For example, when we think the BBS public relations will be unpopular, Zhihu appears as the elite BBS and becomes the best place for people of the public relations to guide the internet public opinions. For example, the internet drama the Girls Love cooperates with LESDO, the APP related to the friendship between gays to conduct the directional communication and lead the social media, making the click volume of the network drama reach 10 million within 24 hours. Learning the transmission of network public relations is not to learn the newest transmission means but to let student understand the public relations in the network era not only exist in the mainstream media. New possibilities and new channels appear endlessly. We must base on the users' needs and explore the transmission paths of public relations that are most appropriate for us in the ever-changing environment.

### *D. Evaluation of Network Public Relations*

Although the evaluation of network public relations still involves the evaluation on the three stages of the preparation, planning and influence of public relation activities, the evaluation indexes involved are greatly different from that of the traditional public relations. The key of the evaluation of traditional public opinions is the press release, on which almost all the evaluation indexes center, such as the quantity of the press release, the quantity of reports of the authoritative media and the position of page position and information tendency. However, the indexes of the evaluation of network public relations are more diversified. For example, the evaluation on the communication effects of the public relation activities that take weibo as the main platform cannot leave out the quantity of repost and comment of people with the marks of blue V and yellow V. Besides, more and more evaluation indexes of public opinions such as the weibo index, WeChat index and headline index appear. Therefore, except for the basic indexes of click rate, number of comments and exposure frequency, the evaluation of network public relations shall formulate the more scientific evaluation standard according to the characteristics of platforms.

## **IV. DISCUSSION ON THE TEACHING METHODS OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE NETWORK PUBLIC RELATIONS**

It's hard to put into practice what is known. In order to let students more thoroughly grasp all links of work related to the

network public relations, it's distinctly important to integrate all the important knowledge points with the working practice in the teaching design. Therefore, in the course of network public relations, I assign two tasks for students. Firstly, I group the students, with five students in each group, and each group needs to independently operate a WeChat Official Account. Before registering the WeChat Official Account, each group must survey the media environment at present to understand the kind, characteristics and audiences of Official Accounts. Based on the investigation, they must plan the orientation, column and popularization of the Official Accounts to be registered. Each Official Account must popularize through releasing at least two articles weekly throughout the semester. In this process, students must continuously improve the skills to operate the Official Accounts according to the knowledge points in class, increase the reading quantity and the amount of

fans, such as popularize the WeChat Official Accounts through depending on the public relations of weibo, in order to apply the knowledge learned by them to the media platform of their own in the first time. Secondly, at the close of the semester, students must summarize and evaluate the operation and popularization of their WeChat Official Accounts in the form of "the Night of WeChat, the Competition of Network Public Relations". In the end, three awards namely the most popular, the best operation and the most creative Official Accounts will be appraised and elected. The daily operation of Official Accounts and the competition of network public relations at the end of term effectively and completely integrate the knowledge points of the investigation, plan, transmission and evaluation of network public relations, letting students apply what they learn to the practice and deepen the understanding of each knowledge point. "Fig. 1"

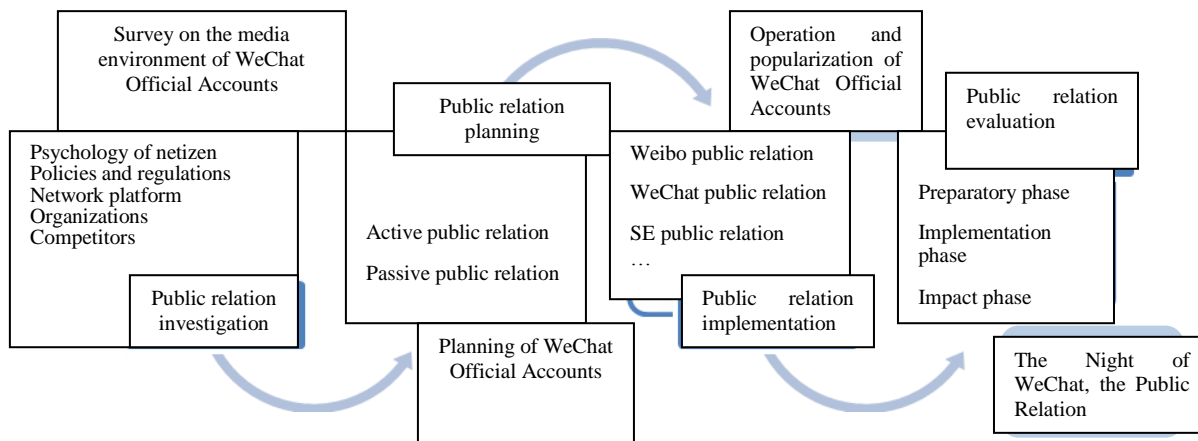


Fig. 1. The combination of the teaching contents and teaching methods of network public relations.

V. CONCLUSION

The teaching effects in the recent two years show students have firmly grasped the knowledge points of network public relations and have obviously strengthened the practical ability. For instance, in the course of network public relations in the last term of 2017, a total of 26 WeChat Official Accounts appear, with the total reading quantity of exceeding 150 000. About 30% of accounts even possess the commercial cooperation. Therefore, the innovation of the teaching model about the course of network public relations has certain practical teaching significance.

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