

Better research, better policy, better reform

CESD | CENTER FOR ECONOMIC
& SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Global Think-Tank

Public Relations Development Policy

The Policy was approved by the CESD Board Members on August 19, 2022

Center for Economic and Social Development (CESD)
Caspian Plaza, 3rd Block, 14th floor
J.Jabbarli str. 44,
Baku, Azerbaijan
Phone: (99412) 5943665
Fax: (99412) 5943665

Email: info@cesd.az
URL: www.cesd.az

Baku, 2022

Introduction

The importance of Public Relations (PR) for both governmental and non-governmental organizations in Azerbaijan refers to an undeniable fact. With an aim to raise their voices, both governmental and non-governmental organizations strive to reinforce their relations with public actors.

Building and developing Public Relations is a comparatively new activity in Azerbaijan, that is why many challenges stand ahead. For instance, while PR activities have 2 essential conditions (professionalism and finance) all over the world, in Azerbaijan, PR activity is mainly based on networking (contacts) rather than on professionalism and finance. This, in turn, means that PR specialist has to have good relations and contacts with the government, business organizations, and media.

Public Relations include collecting and analyzing information that might be useful for the organization to maintain the administration in making appropriate decisions. One of the characteristics that differ PR from other management fields is that Public Relations activities are connected with both the internal and external environment of an organization.

Organizations with the existence of proactive PR departments have lower chances to experience a sudden crash in their reputation. It goes without a doubt that PR is strategically significant for any organization's lifecycle.

Building PR in NGOs

Recent statistics indicate that there are around 4,500 NGOs registered and operating in the country. Some of them do not have any active Public Relations departments. This may be explained through the poor financial resources of the organization and the lack of interest that civil society institutions demonstrate toward PR specialists. Nevertheless, it is hard not to notice that professional Public Relations strategy can reshape the mind of the public.

All NGOs playing a fundamental role in civil society need PR development within their premises to improve their activities and make the operations more clear and reported. Additionally, it is

important to stay in touch with similar foreign organizations and local NGOs, state agencies, and business organizations, including the media.

Nevertheless, building relations with governmental and business organizations is a complicated task in some cases.

Challenges with State Agencies

Firstly, some public agencies are not close to civil society institutes. This probably stems from the fact that they are not used to working with NGOs. Even though the majority of state structures contain PR departments, they do not focus their activities on building such types of relations. Notably, they are not interested in building any type of business relations with civil society institutions. In some cases, they do not even provide answers to NGOs' information inquiries. On the other hand, it has to be mentioned that previously NGOs were not professionals in this field, and they did not have enough skills to work and collaborate with state agencies.

Challenges with Business Organizations

Another significant challenge is that big business companies do not cooperate with NGOs usually. There is limited evidence of existing relations between civil society organizations and business entities in Azerbaijan. Government, in its turn, also seems not interested in this matter. As a matter of fact, there are no norms regulating and boosting business-NGO cooperation. NGOs also play their part in being unable to establish strong cooperation with business entities in some cases. As a result, both sides don't have comprehensive and sufficient information in the Corporate Social Responsibility case and enough skills to work in this field.

Relations with Media

Compared to other public relations, NGO-media relations can be considered as effectively improved, although there are some persistent problems. For instance, the media consider NGOs responsible for two institutes cooperated work.

There is a necessity for proper training in preparing and spreading information to the media by increasing the professionalism of people engaged in PR departments.

Participation of media in some events related to the project implementation may also sustain and promote the reputation of the organization along with expanding the outreach of the project.

Public Relations in Center for Economic and Social Development (CESD)

The Center for Economic and Social Development was established in 2005 by economic and social experts educated abroad. Since its foundation, the center has been focusing on Public Relations. CESD was awarded the title of the "most active economic brain" by the Parlaq Social Research Center. A separate PR department was established in the organization since the "Institutional Grant Project by Think Tank Fund" started. The department implements its activities in 4 main directions:

- Relations with Media
- Relations with NGOs
- Relations with governmental organizations
- Foreign relations

Since its establishment, CESD observed significant improvements in all 4 areas of relationship development. The center is active in media presence, which ensures the sustainability and efficiency of its operations. At the same time, CESD is also successful in building partnership with other NGOs operating within the country and abroad.

The Public Relations department puts specific emphasis on the performance and activity of the website since it reflects the main tool of outreach and primary communication.

Governmental Agencies play an active role in specific events organized within the framework of particular projects. For instance, CESD established a partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture

in the framework of the project supported by the European Commission aimed at the promotion and development of agriculture in regions of Azerbaijan.

Objectives and Strategies

Public Relations refer to the best way to build and keep successful relations. The main essentials of these relations are truth, sincerity, morality, and responsibility.

CESD's Public Relations activity is related to the right coordination of relations with all public representatives and aims to answer all information inquiries.

Core essentials:

- Follow developed strategy and communication plan.
- Answer all inquiries in time, and provide updated information about achievements and successes in implemented activities.
- Regularly update the website.
- Promote and develop relations with International and European NGOs.
- Promote and develop relations with state agencies, ensuring the exchange of information and practices.
- Promote and develop relations with the media.