

Public Relations in the United Kingdom

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Part 1: Background information

Official Name: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (includes England, Scotland and Wales)



Capital City: London, England

Major Cities: London, England; Birmingham, England; Glasgow, Scotland; Liverpool, England; Leeds, England; Sheffield, England; Edinburgh, Scotland; Bristol, England; Manchester, England; Leicester, England; Cardiff, Wales; Belfast, Northern Ireland

Official Language: English

Type of Government: Constitutional monarchy

Location: Western Europe, islands including the northern one-sixth of the island of Ireland between the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea, northwest of France

Currency: British pound (GBP)

Culture:

Geert Hofstede conducted a study of how workplace values are influenced by culture based on five dimensions:

1. Power Distance Index (PDI): The low PDI ranking shows equality between societal levels and cooperation across power levels, leading to a stable cultural environment.
2. Individualism (IDV): The high individualism ranking indicates a society with independent views and attitudes. This society tends to be self-reliant and is comprised of loose ties between individuals.
3. Masculinity (MAS): Society in the United Kingdom contains a high degree of gender differentiation of roles. While society tends to be male dominated, the female population is competitive and assertive.
4. Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI): This level indicates a societal tolerance for varying opinions and cultures. Individuals are contemplative and less likely to express emotions.
5. Long-Term Orientation (LTO): Society in the United Kingdom values fulfilling obligations and tradition.

Part 2: Overview of the public relations industry

History

Public relations in the United Kingdom at the local government level was initiated with the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) in 1905. NALGO, established as a way for local officials to lobby the central government, educated the public about local government and its roles in society. By the 1920s public relations started to gain attention through the newly created Institute of Public Administration's journal, *Public Administration*. During World War II, the Ministry of Information provided factual information to the public in order to maintain morale. The 1940s through the 1960s saw growth in the corporate sector of public relations. After Margaret Thatcher took office as prime minister in 1979, public relations grew as a result of deregulation and privatization and the basic need for public relations in this new business environment. By the 1990s public relations was a booming industry as a result of the newly created privatized companies.

Key individuals contributing to the history of public relations in the United Kingdom include J. H. Brebner, Basil Clarke, Fleetward Pritchard, Robert Tallents, Levi Clement Hill, John Elliot and John Grierson.

Image and misconceptions

According to the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), the public relations industry in the United Kingdom is the most highly developed in Europe and ranks second globally, after the United States. More than 48,000 people in the United Kingdom now work in the public relations profession. According to a 2005 CIPR study, public relations in Great Britain created a £6.5 billion turnover, with more industry growth expected in the near future.

Because a degree is not yet required for a career in public relations, the United Kingdom community as a whole is still wary of the industry. Public relations professionals are still considered to be "spin doctors" by some in Great Britain. To combat this misconception and others, transparency and corporate social responsibility have recently become hot topics in British public relations.

Ethics and codes

Currently there is not one nationally recognized code of ethics or code of conduct for public relations in the United Kingdom. However, CIPR requires its members to agree to its code of conduct, which includes fundamentals such as integrity, competence and confidentiality.

Media

Currently there are 847 radio stations, 535 television channels, 1,599 newspapers and 1,940 magazines listed in Media UK, an independent media directory for the United Kingdom.

Part 3: Overview of public relations as it relates to students

Public relations education in the UK

Today there are more than 50 schools in the United Kingdom offering courses in public relations. Of those schools, more than 20 offer a public relations program approved by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations. These institutions include: University of the Arts, University of Bedfordshire, Bournemouth University, Cardiff University, Birmingham City University, University of Central Lancashire, DeMontfort University, Dublin Institute of Technology, University of Gloucestershire, University of Greenwich, University of Huddersfield, Leeds Metropolitan University, Liverpool John Moores University, Lincoln University, London Metropolitan University, Manchester Metropolitan University, Napier University, Queen Margaret University, University College Plymouth, Robert Gordon University, Southampton Solent University, University of Stirling, University of Sunderland, University of Teesside, Thames Valley University, University of Ulster, and University of Wolverhampton.

Public relations education in the United Kingdom began with the development of the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) in 1948. IPR created a two-party diploma at the Regent Street Polytechnic, London, in 1956, with courses taught by established practitioners. By the 1970s IPR offered an IPR certificate, the Higher National Certificate in Business Studies, and a diploma in public relations. The University of Stirling gave the first public relations degree in Great Britain in 1988. In order to compensate for the increased call for professionalism, IPR created a system of recognized programs in 1991. By 1998 IPR had introduced a diploma qualification as a way for its members to gain chartered status. The Institute became the Chartered Institute of Public Relations in 2005, making public relations officially recognized as a profession in Great Britain.

British public relations education concentrates on a two-way symmetrical model. Studies are focused on legal, ethical, social, cultural and technological considerations. After graduation, students are generally expected to practice for two years as a technician before working toward more strategic functions in the organization or agency. Many schools in the United Kingdom now offer postgraduate degrees in public relations. In addition, CIPR offers an advanced certificate in public relations for recent graduates and a postgraduate diploma in public relations for experienced professionals. Members of the CIPR may also test their knowledge of public relations through the Developing Excellence — Continuous Professional Development plan.

Pre-professional experiences

CIPR offers a student membership to those studying public relations at a CIPR approved university. The Institute also offers an affiliate studying membership to those not studying a CIPR approved course. CIPR student members are entitled to reduced membership fees for the first two years after graduation. Student members benefit from a membership in CIPR in many ways, including keeping up-to-date with industry trends with a PRWeek subscription, Profile (the CIPR magazine), Behind the Spin (a public relations magazine written by students for students), and a monthly CIPR student e-newsletter. The Institute also provides a student member Web site with advice on finding jobs, benefits of a public relations degree, research on various sectors of the industry and access to campaign case studies. In addition, the Work Placement Finder offers members

a database of current job openings in the United Kingdom. CIPR organizes regular networking opportunities and meetings for professionals and students on the regional and national level.

Work experience for students is highly encouraged by the CIPR. Internships, both paid and unpaid, are common for students in the United Kingdom as well as working while pursuing a postgraduate degree.

Resources Used:

<http://www.cipr.co.uk/>

The Chartered Institute of Public Relations, the United Kingdom's leading public relations industry professional body

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

CIA World Factbook

<http://www.geert-hofstede.com/>

Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

<http://www.globalpr.org/>

Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, a framework for collaboration with a mission to enhance the public relations profession and its practitioners throughout the world <http://www.mediauk.com/> Media UK, an independent media directory for the United Kingdom <http://www.prca.org.uk/> The Public Relations Consultants Association, the voice of public relations consultancies in the United Kingdom