**PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR) AS A TOOL FOR**

**THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE JUDICIAL-MEDIA RELATIONS**

**A PRESENTATION**

**BY**

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**PROTOCOL**

**INTRODUCTION**

All thanks and praises be to the Almighty God, the Ancient of Days, who made it possible for us to gather here today for a progressive conversation on the essence of Public Relations.

I, also express my sincere appreciation to the Administrator, Secretary of the Institute, Director of Studies, Management and Staff of the National Judicial Institute, Abuja for putting this very important workshop together and inviting me to speak.

The theme for this year’s workshop **“Advancing Justice through Effective Court Services”** is very apt and timely, as the need for effective service delivery by our Courts cannot be over-emphasized.

The Nigerian Judiciary has evolved in the last 22 years and is diversifying its operations and creating more opportunities for effective service delivery in line with **organizational change** and **re-engineering** in the Public Service.

According to the former Chief Justice of Nigeria, Hon. Justice Walter Samuel Nkanu Onnoghen, “**the Judiciary due to its conservative nature had stagnated in its operations while other arms of government have continued to undergo reforms. It is now urgent than ever to undertake a holistic reform of the Judiciary”** .

Some of the reforms were career development of Judiciary staff, effective and efficient service delivery which are urgently needed.

I have been asked to speak on the topic **“Public Relations (PR) as a tool for the improvement of the Judicial-Media Relations”.** According to the National Judicial Policy, 2016 Article 3:4, 5, 9 (9), **“**Every Judiciary in Nigeria should establish a Public Enlightenment unit to enlighten the Public on the workings of the Judiciary”.

Sub 4. The training of all manpower is very necessary and must be undertaken where necessary.

**OBJECTIVES:**

* Explain the meaning of Public Relations (PR) mass media
* Identify Public Relations (PR) tools
* Identify the essence of Judicial and Media Relations
* Identify strategies for improving Judicial and Media Relations
* Benefits of an improved Judicial and Media Relations

**WHAT IS PUBLIC RELATIONS: OPERATIONAL DEFINITION**

The British Institute of Public Relations (now Chartered Institute of Public Relations) defines Public Relations as a “planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an individual or organization and its public”.

It is a strategic communication that builds mutually beneficial relationship between the Judiciary as an organization and the public/Court users/litigating public.

From the above definition, Public Relations focuses on earning public trust and engagement through mass media. This ranges from press coverage to word-of-mouth communication and in today’s digital age, through social media interactions.

Public Relations involves managing information between an individual or organization and the public to influence their perception and create a favourable point of view.

**MASS MEDIA**

Mass Media are simply “media of mass communication”. Those are media channels or vehicles through which information, education, entertainment or general people-oriented messages are conveyed to the masses/public. (Akande, 2003) e.g print media, broadcast media, social media, websites, e.t.c. Therefore, media relations is the strategic management of relationship between an organization and the Media.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLS**

The basic goals of Public Relations:

* To attract public attention
* Win belief
* Achieve understanding
* Earn goodwill

The underlisted are Public Relations tools used to communicate to the public.

* Oral communication – enquiries, questions and clarification, interview.
* Print media – newspaper, magazines.
* Printed and graphic communication – fliers, handbills, newsletter, pamphlets or leaflets and press release (a written communication used in Public Relations to announce something to the media).
* Broadcast media – radio, television, films etc.
* Digital media – social media (Facebook, Istagram, Youtube, X (Twitter), Tiktok, WhatsApp etc), website, exhibitions.

Public Relations can play a significant role in improving relations between the Judiciary and the Media.

* These two (2) entities often find themselves at odds due to their differing roles in society – Judiciary’s need for impartially and confidentiality versus the media’s role in transparency and public accountability.

Effective Public Relations strategies can help bridge this gap, fostering better understanding and cooperation for the good of the society.

**OBJECTIVES OF PUBLIC RELATIONs IN JUDICIARY & MEDIA RELATIONS**

1. Promote understanding
2. Facilitate communication
3. Enhance transparency
4. Build Trust
5. Crisis management

**STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING JUDICIAL AND MEDIA RELATIONS**

1. **Education and Training**

Organize workshops for media practitioners to understand judicial processes and for the Judiciary to understand media operations.

1. **Regular Communication/Meeting**

Issue regular Press releases and hold press briefings to keep the media informed about significant developments and milestones in the Judiciary. Hold regular meetings between Judiciary and Media to discuss issues and improvements.

1. **Engage Qualified Public Relations Professionals**

(Establishment circular of 21st March, 2024, HCSF/SPOP/ODD/CND/100/S.1/196)

1. **Public Access to Information**

Make Court documents, decisions and schedules easily accessible to the media. (Freedom of Information Act 2011)

1. **Media Liaison/Information**

Establish a Media Unit to facilitate communication and address concerns.

1. **Crisis Communication**

Plan and be ready for potential crisis to ensure timely and accurate information dissemination.

1. **Feedback Mechanism**

Get feedback from media representatives about their interactions with Judiciary.

1. **Ethical Guidelines**

Develop ethical guidelines for interaction between the Judiciary and the Media to ensure Professionalism and respect.

**BENEFITS OF IMPROVED JUDICIAL AND MEDIA RELATIONS**

1. Enhanced Public Trust
2. Reduced Misinformation
3. Increased Accountability
4. Better Crisis Management

**CONCLUSION**

From experience, Public Relations build and maintain relationships. Public Relations is ultimately about people; establishing trust and reliability with our clients, media and other stakeholders are as crucial and key to the success of Judicial and the media relations.

I will leave you with some thoughts.

Judiciary –Media Relations-

1. Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIP?
2. Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

**QUESTIONS**

Thank you.