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Government Public Relations and New Public Management**

This paper discusses the historical growth of government public relations (GPR) in the US as well as the model used in teaching that describes the purposes, audiences, tools, and organizational characteristics of those governments with successful GPR programs. The paper suggests that good GPR is essential for Modern Public Management as well as variants such as Public Value Theory. However, three recent changes in the nature of communications in society are now rapidly increasing the power and importance of GPR to government. These three changes are the adoption in government of the new models of public relations developed in the private sector; increased use of mass communications technologies; and the rapid spread of e-government. As a result of the importance of GPR for modern public management and the increasing importance of communications in government, the paper makes recommendations for addition of specific GPR content to be included in Russian MPA programs. In the US, the science of GPR developed over a period of more than two hundred years. Thomas Jefferson spoke of "public relations" to the Congress in 1807. President Jackson appointed the first communications officer in the White House in the 1820s. US GPR was also misused, such as during the Vietnam War or the Watergate scandals of President Nixon. However, at the state and local level of government, GPR brings about two-way dialogues with the public that guides the development of public policy in America's over 84,000 units of government. The current approach to GPR in the US is described by the model of Dr. Mordecai Lee of the University of Wisconsin. The model includes eight purposes which are commonly found throughout the US: public information services; voluntary reporting; responsiveness; communications used in the management of services; education programs outside of formal education in schools; programs to encourage voluntary compliance with laws and regulations; public participation in the activities of government; and support for the government. A ninth purpose underlies all eight—the transparency of government. The model also identifies the most common audiences: customers, communities, interest groups, citizens, elected officials, and other governments as well as common forms of communications such as press conferences. The model also describes the six organizational factors that are associated with governments that have successful GPR programs. These factors are a high level of ability to deal with crises; leadership with strong communications skills; an organizational structure adapted to modern communications; robust performance measurement abilities; skills in conflict management; and extensive communications with employees. The model describes communications characteristics of governments that are in keeping with the requirements of both New Public Management and variants such as Public Value Theory. For example, NPM emphasizes a market orientation where communications with customers is highly important. NPM also emphasizes disaggregation which in turn requires a higher level of communications in order to help citizens understand the greater complexity of government. Three changes in society have greatly increased the power of government communications: improvements in the science of public relations; innovations in mass communications; and the growth of e-government. Recently, a new model of public relations based on symmetrical, two-way, values-based communications has become dominant. This model is used in the private sector by some of the most well-known companies in the world. This same model also increases the power of government communications with the public. GPR using these new approaches has become even more powerful with the adoption of new mass communications technologies by citizens. Most government workers think of these

changes in terms of the Internet and email or web pages. But the fundamental change in society is the change in the nature of human culture due to these new technologies. For example, a citizen now can receive the same information about the journey of a proposed law in the American congress as the aid to a US Senator. That citizen also can instantly communicate with multiple lobby groups and their political party. President Andrew Jackson once opened the doors of the White House to anyone in Washington, DC to create a "people's house." Today, the doors of government in the US are open to anyone with Internet. Those two factors are becoming integrated into a third factor, e-government. The expansion of e-government throughout all units of government in the US creates a powerful platform for government communications. E-government portals draw a mass audience—everyone who uses government visits their web sites; the e-government IT provides low cost production of text, audio, video, and other materials; and e-government provides powerful analytic tools such as for public opinion polling. The combination of powerful new models of public relations, increasingly sophisticated technology integrated into every part of daily life, and the communications power of e-government are greatly increasing the power government communications. The era of government communications being based on press relations, press conferences, and press releases is ending. Many governments now integrate communications research, planning, and implementation in the senior management group. These governments realize that the strength of their two-way communications relationships with groups in society greatly improves their ability to understand the wants and needs of the public; manage severe crises; and reduce social conflicts. The increased importance of communications in US government is reflected in the increased recognition given to persons in government who work with communications. Government communications is now becoming a professional function similar to human resources. These changes are now resulting in changes in the schools where future government workers are educated. The US GPR experience suggests potential changes in Russian MPA programs. Accordingly, the paper discusses the reasons for the increased need for GPR in these programs based on US teaching and practice. Based on those needs, the paper then identifies specific potential content to be included. The potential content is then compared to what is taught now in Russian MPA programs. The paper concludes with a series of recommended changes in Russian MPA program content.