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AN EXAMINATION AND EVALUATION OF
THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
IN NEIMAN-MARCUS FORTNIGHTS

THESIS

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By

Paula O'Reagan Falgout, B.A.

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This study examines the organization, function, and role of public relations in Neiman-Marcus Fortnights. Fortnight is an annual October extravaganza combining cultural and community education with merchandising. Information was gathered by interviews with three people associated with Fortnight public relations.

The public relations department follows general goals in planning Fortnight public relations activities. Audiences are not restricted. Public relations responsibilities are publicity, press relations, guest relations, community relations, and special events. Evaluations are made with respect to public relations activities of the previous Fortnight.

Though public relations is of secondary importance to merchandising, the effectiveness of Fortnight activities would be improved with established objectives, specific audiences, and a formal means of evaluation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Neiman-Marcus specialty stores are a symbol as well as an establishment (12). The stores cater to "the smart money crowd," and Neiman-Marcus executives say that the company name is its most important sales item (1, p. 26).

The chain has been called the leading "high-style" institution of the Southwest (27, p. 42) and "a voice of fashion" (18, p. 65), and has been credited with providing Dallas its first national recognition (25, p. 45). In 1939 Selma Robinson noted the extent of Dallas fashion influence when she wrote:

It is the proving ground, the court where fashions are tried. And for excellent reasons--economic, geographic, and social. . . .

Take one more fashion factor for a complete picture--the Marcus family of Texas (15, p. 58).

The first store was established in Dallas in 1907 by Herbert Marcus and his sister, Carrie Marcus Neiman, and her husband, Al Neiman. The founders sought only the sale of goods that suited each customer and the identification of their store with high quality and high standards (15, p. 3).

When Al Neiman sold his company stock in 1928 after a divorce, Neiman-Marcus already was known as a provider for the rich (16, p. 114).

The company has since expanded to fourteen cities from California to Washington, D.C. In 1968 Carter Hawley Hale Stores Inc., the seventh-largest department store chain in the nation, acquired Neiman-Marcus for \$40,000,000 (6, p. 90).

Former Neiman-Marcus Chairman Stanley Marcus is responsible for much of the company's expansion and rise to international recognition (5, p. 116). He said that he considers his shaping of Neiman-Marcus public relations and advertising programs to be one of his great contributions to the company (3, p. 119). Marcus wrote of his abilities:

Somewhere in my education I . . . picked up a sense of promotion, an understanding of how to do things that would get a maximum amount of desirable publicity, a flair for communicating with people by doing things that commanded attention (15, p. 52).

In 1934 Marcus drew attention to Dallas by advertising in national fashion magazines Vogue and Harper's Bazaar which, until then, had restricted editorial credits to New York stores (15, p. 53). Marcus is responsible for two annual Neiman-Marcus promotions: Neiman-Marcus Christmas Book and "Fortnight." Sales from the Christmas catalog account for approximately 10 per cent of annual Neiman-Marcus sales (1, p. 28). Fortnight is a

combination of fashion shows, exhibitions, and luncheonettes for a two-week period in the downtown Dallas store.

Fortnight is an annual October extravaganza focusing on the wares and culture of a country or group of countries. During Fortnight the downtown Dallas Neiman-Marcus store is decorated lavishly and merchandise displays feature the featured country. More than 250,000 people are said to visit the downtown store during a typical Fortnight (26).

Community involvement is an integral part of Fortnight success. Neiman-Marcus sponsors foreign artists and celebrities in public appearances ranging from civic club meetings to benefits (21, p. 40). The Neiman-Marcus Fortnight Gala, benefiting one of the civic, cultural, or artistic institutions of Dallas, has become one of the major social events of not only the city and the state but the region and nation (24).

The initial purpose of Fortnight was to overturn an annual October business lag (15, p. 150). The first presentation in 1956 featured French cultural accomplishments and superior French goods to Dallas residents (10, p. 31). That year Neiman-Marcus netted its largest October sales increase. One visitor termed the first Fortnight "an artistic triumph and a commercial success" (15, p. 150).

Stanley Marcus attributes the success of the first and following Fortnights to four factors:

First, intensive market research done in the country by a large staff of our own buyers, who not only bought the best merchandise available, but who also helped create new products; second, the store decoration, which had to be exciting and dramatic from the first through the sixth floor; third, advertising, which was concentrated exclusively on the merchandise of the honored country for a two-week period; and fourth, special events, consisting of the various cultural events outside the store, artisans working in the store, and above all, the presence of well-known people from the country involved, for in the long run, it is people who make news, not merchandise (15, p. 155).

The cost of each Fortnight is divided evenly between Neiman-Marcus and the featured country. Neiman-Marcus does not guarantee the participating country a set number of purchases, but buys only goods that it believes can be sold (15, p. 155).

France and Great Britain have been featured four times each, and Italy and the Orient three times. Other participating countries were Switzerland, Denmark, Austria, Ireland, Spain, Japan, South America, and the United States. The theme has deviated only twice: in 1971 when the imaginary country of Ruritania was presented, and in 1972 when "Fête des Fleurs" featured flowers.

Other events are timed to coincide with Fortnight. Cityfest, to draw people to downtown Dallas, is held in October along with Fortnight and the Texas State Fair. The Sale Street Fair to benefit the Creative Learning

Center was initially held in conjunction with Fortnight, but the two events are no longer related.

Many people benefit from Fortnight activities. A Dallas institution receives the proceeds from the Fortnight Gala. Visitors to the downtown store see the exhibitions and customs of another country. Civic club members hear noted foreign authorities speak on subjects in their respective fields. Foreign products and manufacturers gain international recognition from the association with Fortnight. As Fortnight sponsor, the Neiman-Marcus reputation for association with high quality is enhanced.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to examine the organization, function, and role of public relations in Neiman-Marcus Fortnights.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study were (a) to determine how public relations for Fortnight is organized, (b) to identify the goals, purposes, and role of public relations for the event, and (c) to determine methods for evaluating the effectiveness of the public relations program.

Questions To Be Answered

The study asked the following questions about the public relations role in Neiman-Marcus Fortnight.

1. What is the public relations role in Neiman-Marcus Fortnight?
2. How is the public relations organized for Neiman-Marcus Fortnight?
3. Who is responsible for organization of the public relations in Neiman-Marcus Fortnight?
4. What written goals and objectives are available for the public relations role in Neiman-Marcus Fortnight?
5. What criteria are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the public relations role in Neiman-Marcus Fortnight?

Review of Literature

Neither Journalism Quarterly, 1924-81, nor Public Relations Journal, 1944-80, included any articles about Neiman-Marcus Fortnight public relations. Public Relations Journal included several articles on international fairs, good will projects, and international public relations.

Three studies of public relations structure and campaigns provided guidelines and background information for this study of Neiman-Marcus Fortnight public relations.

In Barbara J. Milacek's thesis, "A Study of the Public Relations Structures and Activities at Selected Dallas Hotels," public relations activities of eight Dallas hotels were examined as to organizational

structure, shared objectives and goals, identification of functions and activities within hotel public relations, and determining methods for evaluating the effectiveness of practices. A senior management official and public relations personnel at each of the selected hotels were interviewed. Milacek concluded that public relations has not been considered a vital hotel function and coordinators regarded public relations as being of secondary importance when combined with sales and marketing. Although the public relations coordinator's main duty was hotel image-building, all eight hotels lacked formal research methods to determine public opinion (17).

Sharon S. Frazier's thesis, "Development of the Public Relations Campaign for the 1975 Mountain State Art and Craft Fair," documented the development and use of a public relations campaign for an annual art and craft fair. Residents within a 350-mile radius of the fair site were targeted as the primary public. The campaign object was to attract as many residents as possible through extensive mass media use. The study concluded that the campaign might be improved by evaluating the effectiveness of public relations tools in carrying out the fair objectives and seeking visitors from outside the target area (11).

Robert M. Bux's thesis, "Public Relations at the Dr Pepper Company," explored consumer relations, stockholder

relations, and community relations to determine positive practices, program deficiencies, and how faults were remedied. Findings were based on interviews with the public relations director and his assistant. The study concluded that the company lacked pre- and post-tests for evaluating public relations program effectiveness (4).

A computer search for literature at the Information Science Building at North Texas State University led to several magazine articles about Neiman-Marcus and Fortnight. These articles discussed the history and operation of Neiman-Marcus and Fortnight, but not the role of public relations in Fortnights.

Justification

The Fortnight concept has been copied, but not staged on as large a scale or as successfully as Neiman-Marcus. As the sponsorship by business of cultural events increases, an examination of studies in the public relations field will be needed.

The results of this study will benefit public relations practitioners and students by documenting activities, organization, and purposes of a special event involving (a) international public relations, (b) various groups outside of an organization, and (c) changing cultural activities within an organization's facilities to appeal to different interest groups.

The results could be used as criteria for retail public relations activities and programs.

The study results will add to the body of knowledge by providing a basis for future study and comparison in the public relations field of specialty-store retailing.

Definition of Terms

Audience--the group toward which Fortnights are directed. Subgroups are employees, customers, local and out-of-town community, news media, and the featured country. Stockholders are not a subgroup.

Limitations

This study is restricted to the public relations for Neiman-Marcus Fortnights in Dallas and does not include general Neiman-Marcus public relations activities.

The scope of this study includes the Fortnights from 1956 through 1981.

Methodology

Information for the study was gathered by interviews with three people currently or formerly associated with public relations and publicity in Neiman-Marcus Fortnight, including Stanley Marcus, creator of Fortnights and former Neiman-Marcus chairman (Appendix A); Neiman-Marcus Executive Vice President of Marketing and Sales Promotion Tom Alexander, the official in charge of

Fortnights; and Keith Nix, Neiman-Marcus vice president for public relations (Appendix B).

Neiman-Marcus files were examined for materials about the role of public relations in Fortnight.

Information gathered from the interviews and files sought to identify the organization, role, and function of public relations in Fortnight; to determine goals and objectives for the Fortnight public relations role; and to identify criteria used to evaluate the effectiveness of Fortnight public relations activities.

Marcus said that the main purpose of exhibitions and other nonselling activities is promotional (22, p. 219). The distinction between promotion through marketing and promotion through public relations is slight. But through the use of public relations, an organization's reputation is improved (8, p. 9). Advertising includes an accepted bias, but public relations techniques should be unbiased (13, p. 9).

Scott Cutlip and Allen Center, and later Doug Newsom and Alan Scott, wrote that public relations activities involve four steps: Identify the problem and establish objectives, select the publics, develop a plan of action and seek management and staff support, and evaluate the results (8, p. 139; 19, p. 299).

In the same way that public relations does not have a single definition, public relations programs do not have a

single set of criteria by which to be evaluated. An examination of works by Cutlip, Center, Frank Walsh, Lawrence Nolte, Philip Lesly, and Frank Jefkins yielded the following common characteristics of public relations programs.

1. The relationship of an organization to the community is examined and public attitudes and behavior toward the organization are considered.
2. Planning specific objectives, audiences, costs, and timetables provides determinable results.
3. The chosen action is consistent with the policies, principles, and character of an organization.
4. Ethical, legal, and social implications are considered and the proposed action is in the public interest.
5. Program and activities are carried out.
6. A specific method for evaluating program results and effectiveness provides two-way communication.
7. The evaluation results influence plans to continue, alter, or end similar programs in the future.

Cutlip and Center (8, p. 14), and Walsh (7, p. 4)

added:

8. Action is characterized by an emphasis on communications.

Lesly added:

9. Anticipating problems or needs.
10. Planning to improve a group attitude (14, p. 7).

Nolte added:

11. Honesty as a basic public relations characteristic (20, p. 9).

Simon added:

12. Experienced public relations practitioners plan programs that contain related individual units which are not openly commercial, but may be combined for maximum audience exposure (23, p. 229).

The identified public relations steps and characteristics were used as criteria by which the data were compared.

Organization of Thesis

This study is organized into three chapters:

Chapter I introduces the study; Chapter II presents the data; and Chapter III presents the summary and conclusions.

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CHAPTER II

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Before Fortnight public relations is examined, the role of public relations in retail promotions, its relationship to marketing and sales, and its unique problems must be explained.

Public relations is an integral part of the total marketing scheme. Other marketing elements include advertising, visual presentations, market research, and merchandising, everything short of selling.

Close work between other marketing components and public relations is necessary for program implementation and to communicate public relations messages and standpoints. Merchandise can draw as much attention through news releases as it does through advertisements and displays.

Fortnight is different from the sales promotions of other stores. The Neiman-Marcus executive vice president of marketing and sales promotion said that though the Fortnight concept is widely emulated, it has not been equaled. The fundamental for other promotions is 100 per cent merchandising, compared to 70 per cent of the

emphasis of Fortnight. The remaining 30 per cent of the Fortnight emphasis is cultural and community education. Neiman-Marcus employees working in these areas are not directly concerned with the volume of merchandise sold.

The key to successful retailing is the ability to foresee trends and buy accordingly. Eighty per cent of Neiman-Marcus nonmonetary resources goes toward buying, leaving 20 per cent to go toward selling. Alexander said the link between public relations and the sales department is weak. As a sales promotion, more Fortnight emphasis needs to be placed on selling. A better program of informing the public of happenings in fashion and the store is needed. The goal of Neiman-Marcus is to place emphasis more on selling than on buying.

The Neiman-Marcus vice president for public relations said that public relations is an adjunct of the salesperson. Every salesperson is involved in public relations through daily contact with customers. The salesperson's courteous and friendly treatment of customers builds good will toward Neiman-Marcus.

Retailers encounter the same public relations problems as wholesalers. News is generated by bringing the proper newsmaking elements together. Retailers must present their products from a unique angle to generate as much news media coverage as competing companies with single products.

In earlier days the term "public relations" aroused suspicion because the term implied a need to overcome a bad image. A bad image was established when the words or actions of individuals within a company lessened community opinion of the company. Public relations actions were planned to correct the action or situation and improve attitudes toward the company. The mention of public relations still arouses suspicion in a community.

Potential problems are anticipated in planning so that public relations activities will be executed as perfectly as possible. If something goes wrong while an event is taking place, the public relations staff must be disciplined and flexible enough to improvise before the effects are felt by guests.

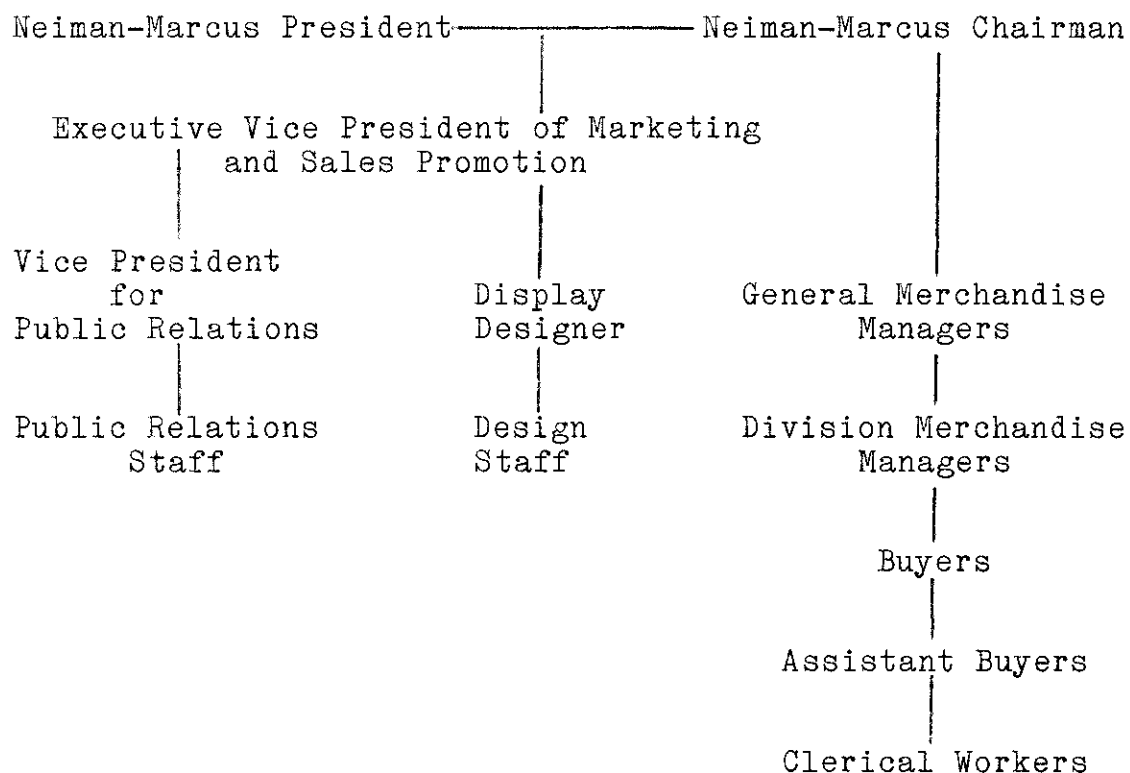
Public Relations Organization

The data gathered through interviews with Neiman-Marcus public relations officials indicated that the Neiman-Marcus public relations department plans the public relations activities for each Fortnight.

The vice president for public relations heads the department and directs the five department employees. Each employee is responsible for a specific Fortnight public relations area, such as the gala and the news media, but each is expected to be flexible because some of the duties overlap. The vice president for public relations

and Fortnight display designer are accountable to the executive vice president of marketing and sales promotion, who is accountable to the president and chairman. The heads of merchandising are accountable directly to the president and chairman.

TABLE I
FORTNIGHT ORGANIZATION



Goals and Objectives

Neiman-Marcus does not have written goals for Fortnight public relations activities.

General departmental goals are applied to Fortnight public relations activities. General departmental goals

are (a) to draw more national and international attention to Neiman-Marcus, and (b) to develop a more cost-efficient means of handling guests.

Nix said that Fortnight has general goals rather than one specific goal. These general goals are (a) to attract more visitors to the downtown Dallas store, and (b) to draw more news media coverage of Fortnight in the areas of travel, human interest, and society.

Though Nix said that attracting more visitors is a general Fortnight goal, Alexander said that striving for larger attendance alone does not make sense. Establishing higher attendance as a goal is difficult because Fortnight attendance figures have not been kept. Alexander said that an evaluation must rise above numbers because a high attendance does not necessarily mean that an event was more successful than the previous year.

Fortnight was not conceived with public relations in mind. The original goal, developed by Marcus, was to overcome a usually slow business period in October. The goal of each Fortnight is to be more successful and exceed the sales figures of the previous Fortnight.

Top Neiman-Marcus executives are responsible for formulating public relations goals. The executive vice president of marketing and sales promotion has worked on at least half of the Fortnights and formulates the goals as part of the Fortnight structure. The vice president

for public relations said that the goals are developed through an agreement between the president and chairman.

The procedure for developing goals is one of anticipation and follows a cause-and-effect sequence. Though certain elements, such as displays and personal appearances by guests, are basic to Fortnight, other elements must change to develop interest and draw visitors back each year. Because drawing more attention to Neiman-Marcus is one of the goals applied to Fortnight, potential exhibitions and cultural attractions are considered at the national and international levels. Then the staff discusses feasible plans, potential weaknesses, and with what degree of success the activities will be met. The ideas that will make Fortnight at least as successful as the previous one are pursued.

Fortnight public relations goals are measured with respect to achievements of the previous Fortnight and do not change from year to year.

Fortnight public relations goals were not measured until four or five years ago. Since then the goals have been measured subjectively by the executive vice president of marketing and sales promotion, vice president for public relations, and the public relations staff.

Public Relations Responsibilities

Nix said public relations is vital to Fortnight because Fortnight is an educational process using the five senses and encourages community interest in further education. Public relations through Fortnight has lifted up Neiman-Marcus above the average retailer. The continuing challenge to Neiman-Marcus is to keep from being perceived as just "another piece of real estate."

The vice president for public relations plans and is directly responsible for Fortnight public relations activities, though he said that the executive vice president is ultimately responsible.

Public relations responsibilities are (a) publicity before and after an event, (b) press relations, (c) civic involvement, (d) guest relations, and (e) special events.

A directory to Fortnight provides publicity before events. The directory lists entertainment, restaurants, daily events, and floor-by-floor attractions throughout the downtown store and Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex. Newspaper advertisements follow a similar format and list daily cultural events by week. A cultural event is based on history and wide acceptance and represents the lifestyle and customs of a society.

The public relations department distributes press packets to free-lance writers and reporters covering Fortnight. News releases are sent to fashion, food, and

business editors of regional and national magazines and area newspapers. News releases include photographs as applicable. Regional magazines sent news releases comprise Texas Monthly and "D"; national magazines comprise Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, and Gentlemen's Quarterly; and newspapers comprise The Park Cities News, Downtown News, The Dallas Morning News, and Dallas Times Herald. Originally all reporters were given the same feature story suggestions. Now The Dallas Morning News and Dallas Times Herald are given different exclusives. The public relations department arranges press conferences of varied length and size for guests of honor.

Public relations responsibilities for guest relations include (a) receptions for guests, (b) guest accommodations, and (c) individual schedules. The department compiles a working schedule of events that the guest of honor and his entourage will attend. The schedule chronologically lists the time, location, type of transportation to and from, and projected attendance of each event. Program and speech abstracts are listed for some formal events.

Individual schedules are noted on a master list. The individual's name, date of arrival, and hotel are in one column and the Fortnight social events and available transportation are listed at the top of the schedule. An

"X" is placed under events the individual will attend and the assigned transportation.

Special events to be coordinated include (a) demonstrations of native crafts and customs, (b) public appearances by invited guests, (c) in-store events, (d) the Fortnight social schedule, and (e) related city events.

A responsibility sheet coordinates the work of several divisions to produce a special event. The sheet lists the time, location, and projected attendance of a special event. The sheet addresses sectional directors regarding preparations and deadlines for completion of tasks for a special event. The sheet includes instructions for (a) lighting, (b) wording and placement of signs, (c) janitorial duties, (d) extra security, (e) supporting committees, and (f) storage and dressing facilities.

The public relations department provides invitations, menus, guest lists, and schedules for special events. The schedule of events provides the breakdown by time of activities that are part of a particular public relations event. The Fortnight social schedule chronologically lists the social events and the locations during the Fortnight period. This schedule does not include all of the events to which the guest of honor is invited and is much

shorter than the working schedule of events for the guest of honor and his entourage.

Audiences

The data provided information regarding audiences and whether public relations activities vary according to them.

Marcus said that interested people across the nation and throughout the retail fashion industry are considered the audiences.

Alexander said the audiences are not restricted. Because most of the activities are free, money is not a restraint. The audiences include (a) the news media, (b) special interest groups, (c) readers of metropolitan newspapers, (d) neighborhoods of people, (e) potential Neiman-Marcus customers, and (f) schoolchildren. Social studies to supplement the schoolchildren's learning are planned by some Dallas teachers to coincide with Fortnight. These studies of the featured country are expanded to include field trips to the downtown Dallas store.

Nix said that Fortnight has no target audience other than the region and the general public. The region was not well-traveled when Fortnight began, so Fortnight helped educate Southwesterners about other countries. The people that Neiman-Marcus seeks to include range from young to old and are not limited to customers.

Both Alexander and Nix said that the Fortnight audience is not restricted. Yet their answers differ because Alexander specified subgroups of the general audience, whereas Nix said no smaller units exist.

Neiman-Marcus has no stockholders because it is a wholly owned subsidiary of Carter Hawley Hale Stores. Therefore stockholders are not considered an audience for public relations activities.

Neiman-Marcus management includes employees in the opening excitement of Fortnight. Previously each Fortnight was explained to employees the Friday before it opened. For employee morale and excitement the presentation is now made the morning Fortnight opens to the public. Displays are unveiled, the guest of honor is introduced, and transition themes and major feature areas are explained. The new merchandise is shown to department employees.

Planning Public Relations Activities

The data provided the steps used in planning Fortnight public relations activities.

First a timetable is established. In November of the preceeding year, the executive vice president of marketing and sales promotion and display designer travel to the country selected. They decide what the area is most famous for and how that may best be presented through

food, music, and crafts. Exciting attractions must be planned for each floor of the downtown store because customers visit more of the store during Fortnight than at any other time. As foods become a larger Fortnight item, a larger variety is sought. Speakers in the fields of business, history, architecture, athletics, and the theater are sought for civic events.

In an informal January meeting with the vice president for public relations and his staff, the possible displays and events are discussed. Dallas civic club officers are asked which speakers from among those available would interest them. The least effective presentations and speakers are deleted. Public relations personnel are given their assignments and regular meetings are set up with the executive vice president for status reports. The executive vice president of marketing and sales promotion puts together a working outline of themes.

The working outline of themes describes the store arrangement during Fortnight. The outline is divided according to floors and describes the decorations and displays to be set up in particular areas. Food service areas and menus are listed, as are the date and time of public appearances by invited guests. Tentative displays are marked as pending and participating companies in Fortnight are designated as such. The outline is revised several times before it is finalized.

Compliments and Complaints

Communication between the intended audience and activity planners is a vital part of public relations for the purposes of evaluation and improvement.

The key to successful public relations is anticipating problems and preventing problem situations. The cultural difference between international and Dallas people is likely to cause misunderstanding as the two mingle at Fortnight. Neiman-Marcus officials must be sure of the success of a public relations activity before they offer it. Yet if something goes wrong, the staff must be flexible and creative enough to improvise before the effects are felt. Proper public relations handling of problem situations results in favorable community opinion of Neiman-Marcus.

Comments about Fortnight begin reaching the public relations department as soon as each Fortnight ends. Compliments usually come more slowly than complaints.

Complaints are usually written to the Neiman-Marcus chairman or another individual. The Neiman-Marcus premise is that the customer is always right because the past cannot be recalled. Officials do their best to mollify the individual or publication and may send a gift if they believe that feelings have been hurt.

Evaluating Effectiveness of Public Relations Activities

The data provided information about the criteria used for evaluation, who is responsible for the evaluation, and how Fortnight public relations effectiveness is rated and can be improved.

Criteria for measuring public relations effectiveness are (a) clipbook thickness, (b) attendance, (c) news media feedback, (d) permanence of the events in the community, (e) dollars taken in, and (f) general comments. Much of the evaluation relies on intangibles: comments about the best or most boring events and those Fortnight events still being talked about six months later. Evaluations are made in hope of improving Fortnight the next year.

Local news media coverage is evaluated as to how successful the public relations staff was in planting stories related to Fortnight. Newspaper clippings are read and evaluated to see what subjects were covered in which section and why. Television coverage is listed as to network affiliation, topic, and amount of coverage. National television usually will not cover an event unless it generates certain attendance figures. An exception was the visit of Queen Sirikit of Thailand during Fortnight Orientations in 1981. CBS News covered her activities during two consecutive nights.

The vice president for public relations said that Neiman-Marcus does not have criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of public relations programs and activities, although he and his staff are responsible for the evaluation. The chairman evaluates Fortnight overall, pointing out areas of strength and weakness to the executive vice president. The executive vice president of marketing and sales promotion critiques Fortnight public relations activities subjectively with the premise that "any publicity is good publicity if the name is spelled right."

Marcus said that once evaluated, evaluations have no bearing on the next year's Fortnight.

Alexander said that the effectiveness of Fortnight public relations varies from year to year. On a scale from 1 to 10, he has never seen a 10, and the best possible would be a 9-. He considered the 1981 Fortnight Orientations to be the best public relations program and rated it an 8-. Since the beginning of Fortnight, Stanley Marcus has instructed Fortnight planners to (a) assume that the worst is going to happen, (b) make the best of a situation, and (c) critique. Though Fortnight is generally considered a success, it could be even more successful with the evaluation and perfection of public relations techniques.

Though he lacked criteria for evaluation, Nix rated the effectiveness of Fortnight public relations as

spectacular and said it is "a project meeting with good success."

Alexander said that the effectiveness of Fortnight public relations could be improved by a continued effort to control guest handling and transportation. Awkward moments in protocol, especially during introductions, do not appear on a responsibility sheet and may easily be overlooked. The transportation of guests of honor in limousines and Neiman-Marcus staff and guests in buses to special events could be improved to avoid keeping guests from waiting.

Nix said that in-store events could be broadened. The 1981 Fortnight Orientations included more cultural events than in the past because more money was available for that purpose. A successful Fortnight is reflected in the amount of dollars taken in.

Summary

The vice president for public relations and his staff are responsible for planning Fortnight public relations activities. Public relations responsibilities are (a) publicity before and after an event, (b) press relations, (c) civic involvement, (d) guest relations, and (e) special events.

Neiman-Marcus does not have written goals for Fortnight public relations, but applies general departmental

goals to Fortnight public relations activities. Goals are measured with respect to achievements of the previous Fortnight and do not change from year to year. Criteria for measuring public relations effectiveness are (a) clip-book thickness, (b) attendance, (c) news media feedback, (d) permanence of events in the community, (e) dollars taken in, and (f) general comments. The audience for public relations activities is not restricted.

Suggestions for improving Fortnight are (a) to improve guest handling and transportation, (b) to broaden in-store events, and (c) to secure more money for cultural events.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Fortnight is an annual international October extravaganza in the downtown Dallas Neiman-Marcus store.

Fortnight focuses on the wares and culture of a country or group of countries and is a combination of fashion shows, exhibitions, and luncheonettes during a two-week period. The initial purpose of Fortnight was to overcome an annual October business lag. Fortnight combines cultural and community education with merchandising, whereas the fundamental of most other sales promotions is strictly merchandising.

Fortnight Creator Stanley Marcus attributes the success of the first and following Fortnights to (a) intense market research, (b) store decoration, (c) advertising, and (d) special events. Community involvement in special events is an integral part of Fortnight success.

The Neiman-Marcus public relations department plans public relations activities for each Fortnight. Each departmental employee has a specific area of responsibility, but some duties overlap.

Neiman-Marcus does not have written goals for Fortnight public relations activities. General departmental goals are (a) to attract more visitors to the downtown Dallas store and (b) to draw more news media coverage of Fortnight in the areas of travel, human interest, and society. Public relations goals are formulated by top Neiman-Marcus executives and do not change from year to year.

Public relations responsibilities are (a) publicity before and after an event, (b) press relations, (c) civic involvement, (d) guest relations, and (e) special events.

Audiences for Fortnight public relations activities are not restricted and include (a) the news media, (b) special interest groups, (c) readers of metropolitan newspapers, (d) neighborhoods of people, (e) potential Neiman-Marcus customers, (f) schoolchildren, and (g) employees.

Steps in planning Fortnight public relations activities are (a) to establish a timetable, (b) to search the featured country for potential cultural attractions and speakers, (c) to discuss and select the most effective presentations and speakers, (d) to assign responsibilities to the public relations staff, and (e) to set up regular staff meetings.

Criteria for measuring public relations effectiveness are (a) clipbook thickness, (b) news media feedback,

(c) permanence of the events in the community, (d) general comments, (e) attendance, and (f) dollars taken in. Evaluations are made by the vice president for public relations with respect to achievements of the previous Fortnight.

Suggestions for improving Fortnight public relations activities are (a) to control guest handling and transportation, (b) to broaden in-store events, and (c) to secure more money for cultural events.

Conclusions

Fortnight is an enjoyable, educational time benefiting many people. The importance of public relations to Fortnight is shown in that the public relations department plans so many Fortnight activities: guest and community relations, new media relations, and special events. Yet the secondary importance of public relations is shown in that the vice president for public relations reports to the executive vice president of marketing and sales promotion. On the other hand, the general merchandise managers report directly to the Neiman-Marcus president and chairman.

The present Fortnight public relations organization does not include the four basic public relations steps set forth by Cutlip and Center, and Newsom, and Scott. The organization lacks established objectives, specific audiences, and a formal means of evaluation. Fortnight could

be improved by assuming more of the characteristics of a public relations program.

Two common characteristics of public relations programs are examining an organization's relationship to the community and planning to improve a group attitude. Neiman-Marcus management generally assumes that Fortnight is well-received within the community and that community opinion of Neiman-Marcus is good. But reliance on assumptions does not provide an accurate measurement. Officials lack a pretest for determining community opinion. Planning to improve a group attitude is not possible without first determining the group's present attitude.

Another common characteristic of a public relations program is the planning of specific objectives, audiences, costs, and timetables for determinable results. Officials have no way of measuring progress or determining when these goals have been reached without these specifics.

The public relations department lacks written Fortnight public relations goals and objectives for improving community opinion. General and departmental goals are said to be applied to Fortnight public relations activities. But the goals given by Vice President of Public Relations Keith Nix are different from those goals given by Executive Vice President for Marketing and Sales Promotions Tom Alexander. Without written goals it seems unlikely that goals would remain the same from year to year.

Some discrepancy existed as to who formulates Fortnight public relations goals. Alexander said that he formulates the goals, whereas Nix said that the goals are developed through a consensus between the president and chairman. In either case no indication was given as to the degree of involvement of the public relations department in formulating the goals.

Officials lack specific audiences for Fortnight public relations activities. Marcus, Alexander, and Nix stated general audiences. Admittance to public relations activities need not be restricted. But to achieve maximum public relations effectiveness and determinable results, public relations activities need to be planned with a particular audience in mind. Officials establish and adhere to a specific timetable in planning Fortnight public relations activities.

Public interest is probably one of the largest considerations in planning Fortnight public relations activities. Much of Fortnight's success depends on community involvement. Any planning that might surface as unethical or illegal would minimize the effectiveness of Fortnight public relations activities. In the long run such activity would do far greater damage to the association of Neiman-Marcus with quality. Public relations staff actions are and should continue to be characterized by honesty.

Chosen public relations actions are consistent with the character and policies of Neiman-Marcus. The broad selection of Fortnight cultural activities reinforces the Neiman-Marcus principle that each customer is an individual with varied interests. A second Neiman-Marcus principle is that the customer comes first and an action is in the interest of Neiman-Marcus only if it is first in the interest of the customer. For this reason public relations officials ask the opinion of community leaders regarding possible presentations and speakers. A third Neiman-Marcus principle is that quality is of far greater importance than price. This principle is reinforced in the extreme to which Fortnight planners go to obtain the best cultural displays and speakers. Guests have included the royalty of Monaco and Thailand; famous actors, actresses, and fashion designers; and lesser known authorities in other fields.

Another common public relations characteristic is anticipating problems and needs. Marcus has emphasized since the beginning of Fortnight that public relations planners should prepare for the worst. Staff flexibility is reflected in the planning of an imaginary Ruritanian Fortnight in 1971 after Australia backed out of its Fortnight commitments. In 1981 the planning included preparing for threats on the life of the Queen of Thailand. Both reflect staff versatility in preparing for the worst and not letting guests feel the effects of a problem situation.

Neiman-Marcus officials realize that their handling of an unexpected problem may strengthen or weaken community opinion.

Communication is a vital part of the planning and execution of Fortnight public relations activities. Communication must be maintained with (a) other divisions, (b) the news media, and (c) the intended public relations audiences. Communication among divisions is maintained through regular staff meetings and a responsibility sheet. The public relations department realizes the needs of the new media and supplies them with press packets, story suggestions, and help in setting up news conferences. Communication with the audiences is an area of weakness because much of it is limited to publicity from the Fortnight directory and the answering of complaints. The general Neiman-Marcus rule of answering complaints within forty-eight hours of receiving them is followed.

As stated earlier, the difference between advertising and public relations is that advertising contains an expected, paid for bias, whereas public relations techniques are supposed to be impartial. These units are combined by experienced public relations practitioners for maximum audience exposure. One of the four factors to which Marcus attributes the success of Fortnight is the presence of news-making artisans and well-known

personalities. Community involvement in Fortnight provides more opportunities for news media exposure and publicity.

One of the public relations department's largest handicaps is the lack of a formal method of evaluation. Few of the given criteria accurately measure public relations effectiveness.

A clipbook is useful in helping the public relations staff determine which newspapers and magazines used which story suggestions and where the articles were placed. But measurement of clipbook thickness is not an effective means of measuring the effectiveness of public relations activities. The measurement of clipbook thickness does not indicate (a) the number of article readers, (b) which articles were read, and (c) how much of each article was read.

Attendance figures are another ineffective means of evaluation because attendance has been estimated, not measured. A comparison of attendance figures would yield only an estimation of whether attendance was more or less than the previous year. Even if attendance was measured it would not indicate (a) which audiences were reached, (b) individual response to Fortnight, and (c) the depth to which people understood the presentations.

As stated earlier, intangible comments and feedback are the base for much of the present public relations evaluation. Guests must take the initiative in evaluating the effectiveness of public relations activities. That

evaluation may take place at any time between one Fortnight and another. The comments do not necessarily relate to Fortnight public relations activities. Neiman-Marcus needs to develop two evaluation forms to measure the general reaction to Fortnight public relations activities. One set of standard questions could be distributed and returned within several weeks of Fortnight. The second evaluation could be sent out to different people six months after Fortnight to help determine the permanence of public relations activities within the community.

Only a slight indication of the effectiveness of public relations activities would come from the amount of dollars taken in during Fortnight. Dollars taken in would reflect the degree to which public relations activities are successful as a sales promotion in encouraging business.

A listing of news media coverage, such as a clipbook, is useful in determining which story suggestions were followed and how they were used. A listing does not indicate (a) the number of people watching, (b) their degree of attentiveness, and (c) the length of time they watched. The present evaluation omits radio coverage.

Paradoxically, Marcus instructed Fortnight planners to evaluate Fortnight but said the evaluations would have no bearing on the next year's Fortnight. If evaluation results do not affect succeeding Fortnight public relations activities, the evaluations are meaningless.

Though Fortnight began in 1956, the evaluation of public relations effectiveness did not begin until 1978 or 1979. The evaluation is said to be subjective. But the public relations staff does not have specific criteria for a subjective measurement of the effectiveness of Fortnight public relations activities. A subjective measurement becomes little more than a nonstructured mental evaluation without criteria. An objective evaluation is not possible without criteria.

Suggestions to improve the effectiveness of Fortnight public relations are as follows:

1. To develop a pretest for determining community opinion.
2. To write specific Fortnight public relations goals and objectives for determinable results and to assure consistency from year to year.
3. To select audiences for public relations activities.
4. To include the public relations staff in the formulation of Fortnight public relations goals.
5. To develop better communication with Fortnight audiences.
6. To develop a posttest and more effective means of evaluating Fortnight public relations activities.
7. To use evaluation to influence future public relations planning and activities.

One of the general Fortnight goals is to attract more national and international attention to Fortnight and Neiman-Marcus. Neiman-Marcus has no program for attracting

international attention and international coverage of Fortnight is limited. The concentration of public relations efforts in this area would strengthen world-wide knowledge of Fortnight and Neiman-Marcus.

Recommendations for Further Study

A comparative study could be made of the use of public relations in the sales promotions of specialty retail stores. This study could examine the similarities and differences in organization, goals, and activities.

An analysis of public relations for a world's fair could be made. This study could document the development and implementation of a public relations program, the scope of public relations goals and activities, and how activities are adapted for various cultures.

A comparative study could be made of people coordinating international public relations. This study could examine the individual's public relations background, the individual's qualifications for the job, job requirements, and the type of job training received.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR FORTNIGHT CREATOR

1. What is the philosophy of Fortnite?
2. What were the original goals for Fortnite?
3. How were these goals developed?
4. Do these goals change from year to year?
5. What do you consider to be the responsibilities of public relations in Fortnite?
6. Who generally oversees the public relations functions for Fortnite?
7. Who are the target audiences for Fortnite?
8. How are the goals evaluated?
9. Once evaluated, how do the evaluations affect next year's Fortnite?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICIALS

1. How is public relations vital to Fortnight?
2. How is public relations for Fortnight organized?
3. Does Neiman-Marcus have written goals for Fortnight public relations?
4. If yes, what are these goals?
5. If yes, by what procedure were these goals developed?
6. Who, by title, formulated these goals?
7. What are the steps in planning Fortnight public relations activities?
8. What Fortnight activities does Neiman-Marcus management consider to be public relations?
9. Who, by title, plans and is responsible for Fortnight public relations activities?
10. How do you hear about compliments and complaints about Fortnight public relations activities?
11. What procedure is followed to resolve complaints?
12. Who are the target audiences for Fortnight public relations activities?
13. Who, by title, decides the target audiences?
14. Do Fortnight public relations programs vary according to the audience?

15. Are employees and stockholders considered special audiences?
16. If yes, what public relations activities are planned for them?
17. Which publications, including newspapers, are sent news releases about Fortnight activities?
18. Do the news releases include photographs?
19. Does Neiman-Marcus have criteria by which to evaluate the effectiveness of public relations programs and activities?
20. If yes, what are these criteria?
21. Who, by title, is responsible for the evaluation?
22. Based on the criteria, how do you rate the effectiveness of the Fortnight public relations program?
23. What suggestions do you have to increase the effectiveness of the Fortnight public relations program?
24. What is the working relationship between public relations and marketing?
25. What is the working relationship between public relations and the sales department?
26. What are the unique problems of retail public relations?

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