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What case studies can teach us in international public relations

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Foreword: What case studies can teach us in international public relations

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Public relations scholarship – applied and basic – is bountiful these days. Every published thought is exposed to rigorous comparison and to more diverse audiences than ever before. This, in turn, forces scholars and reflective practitioners to eke out the specific merit of every contribution relative to prior published thought. This is good for the practice and the academy.

As in other mature industries and disciplines, the test of any new work becomes the amount of prior published work that no longer needs to be read in order to understand the state of public relations. In this respect, the second volume of “Public Relations Case Studies from Around the World” is already a success. It builds on the success of the first edition which has been used in several universities throughout the world to teach how public relations is practiced and as such provides a snapshot of practice evolution over time. And, it is filled with fresh new cases that explore best practices across a wide variety of niches and examine trending new developments in the applications of public relations strategies and tactics.

Additionally, the contributions by the authors that Judy VanSlyke Turk and Jean Valin have convened – all widely respected academics and practitioners – illustrate that specific value of case studies in public relations in a wide variety of contexts. The reader will find insights into how public relations is practiced, how theory is applied (or not), and how success is measured, all this from countries where practice is evolved or evolving.

Unlike management and business education – where case studies are widely used and some of them have reached seminal status – the public relations academy has too long suffered from the dichotomy between theory-driven empirical work on the one hand and industry anecdotes on the other. The former often gives answers to questions that were never asked; the latter often implies that one person’s answer is a helpful response to all others’ questions irrespective of context.

Real case studies therefore fill an important gap. Real case studies bear lessons that are valid beyond the situation they describe and thus prepare readers for operating in a cultural context other than their own. Real case studies may lack the certainty of theory or of aggregated data, but that’s precisely because they describe the ambiguities and double binds of international practice or of practicing in a region where traditional practice requires a specific application of strategy. And real case studies stimulate experiential learning and self-guided discovery without which no cross-cultural or cross-boundary public relations will create value.

The case studies in this book do all of these things. They are therefore strong contenders for seminal status in the growing body of knowledge about the practices of international public relations.

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