

Spin (public Relations)

Authored by
mohammad looti

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In public relations, spin is a form of propaganda, achieved through providing an interpretation of an event or campaign to persuade public opinion in favor or against a certain organization or public figure. While traditional public relations may also rely on creative presentation of the facts, "spin" often, though not always, implies disingenuous, deceptive and/or highly manipulative tactics.

Politicians are often accused by their opponents of claiming to be honest and seek the truth while using spin tactics to manipulate public opinion. Because of the frequent association between "spin" and press conferences (especially government press conferences), the room in which these take place is sometimes described as a spin room. A group of people who develop spin may be referred to as "spin doctors" who engage in "spin doctoring" for the person or group that hired them.

Techniques

The techniques of spin include:

Selectively presenting facts and quotes that support one's position (cherry picking)

Non-denial denial

Phrasing in a way that assumes unproven truths

Euphemisms to disguise or promote one's agenda

"Burying bad news": announcing one popular thing at the same time as several unpopular things, hoping that the media will focus on the popular one.

Edward Bernays has been called the "Father of Spin". In his book he describes some situations in twentieth-century America where tobacco and alcohol companies used techniques to make certain behaviors more socially acceptable. Bernays was proud of his work as a propagandist.

For years businesses have used fake or misleading "customer testimonials" by editing/spinning a customers clients to reflect a much more satisfied experience than was actually the case. In 2009 the FTC updated their laws to include measures to prohibit this type of 'spinning' and have been enforcing these laws as of late. Additionally, over the past 5-6 years several companies have arisen that verify the authenticity of the testimonials businesses present on the marketing materials in an effort to convince one to become a customer.

Another spin technique involves the delay in the release of bad news so it can be hidden in the "shadow" of more important or favorable news or events. A famous reference to this practice occurred when UK government press officer Jo Moore used the phrase It's now a very good day to get out anything we want to bury in an email sent on September 11, 2001, following the attacks on the World Trade Center. When this email was reported in the press it caused widespread outrage for which Moore was forced to apologize. She was later made to resign when it was claimed she had sent a similar email following the death of Princess Margaret.

In the United States public affairs dealing with military contacts during the beginning of the War in Iraq used a spin tactic. Several parts of U.S. military wanted to hire PR firms to send out fabricated or misleading information to get a rise in the public approval of the war. Some officials did not want to join information officers with public affairs officers for the fear of undermining the military's credibility. This form of spin uses the tactic of blowing small circumstances out of proportion to get a certain reaction from the public.

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