

Summaries

Walter Hömberg/Eva Schatz: Looking for Orientation. Counseling Journalism in Diocesan Press

In massmedia, there is a long tradition of advisory and counseling journalism in personal life questions (like in Question&Answer columns or programs or self-help-books). As the present time is characterized by personal individualism, this kind of journalism is getting more and more important. Counseling in life- and faith-question is nowadays also demanded by readers of Church press publications.

How does Church press fulfill these expectations of advice for personal life and faith? What kind of help and benefit can readers find in religious papers? In a recent research, these questions were studied by the example of four German diocesan weeklies. Within the period of one year (April 2000 – April 2002), the counseling content of these Church papers was analysed and compared with the same content of three nationwide circulated secular papers. The result shows strength and weaknesses of both categories of papers in counseling journalism. The authors are discussing fully the deficits in formal design and content, and they are showing ways to improve this field of counseling in the Church press.

Horst Avenarius: The case of Hunzinger and its consequences – On Moral of Public Relation Agency work

Moral concerns about Public Relations work arose in Germany when two leading German politicians were forced to resign from their positions because of their fuzzy connections to PR manager Hunzinger. As president of the German Council for Public Relations, the author starts out asking the question why the German Council is authorized to assess the working principles of people working in Public Relations and to proclaim verdicts in the public. Since Hunzinger's activities led to big public discussions by which the work of Public Relations agencies was discredited in general, the Council reprimanded Hunzinger for giving the impression that his way of lobbying was a usual practice. As one consequence of this case the author is suggesting new guidelines for lobbying. Asking for general moral principles in Public Relations, the author mentions some existing obligatory principles which, however, refer to different fields.

There is agreement on some basic rules: to guarantee the independence of all partners, to avoid any kind of coercion and threat, bribery and deception. For the future, the author is expecting more public and transparency in three fields: public information on all big decisions of enterprises and companies; public clarifying of the reasons for critical situations and catastrophes; and accounting to the public for criminal actions of organisations. Finally, Public Relations work must be made credible by its own managers and reveal its own interests. The author sees the autonomy of the public verdicts of the Council legitimized by the first of seven selfcommitments of its members: to serve the public in its social function within society.

Lars Rademacher: Between Truthfulness, Legitimation and Loyalty

Referring to the case of Hunzinger, the author develops a thesis on Public Relations work which is connecting personal and social dimensions. He is suggesting to judge this work neither from its social milieu nor by moral associations but with a multi-value logic which enables individual as well as collective responsibility. Such a multi-value ethic should be open for individual decisions as well as for understanding the role-system of Public Relations. Like Advertising and Marketing, Public Relations work has to be regarded as a legitimate communication of orders. Public Relations work includes universal responsibility for organisational communications and has the function of social orientation. When Public Relations work in public is still incriminated of recklessness, this impression is supported by activities in a self-complacent way as shown by Hunzinger. Judged by ethical principles as suggested in a multi-value system, Hunzinger's activities must be regarded as violation of the duty to truthfulness and of the discretion and loyalty owed to his clients.

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