

WestminsterResearch

<http://www.westminster.ac.uk/westminsterresearch>

**Nonprofit Issues Management: A New Approach to Resist the
Label of 'Risk'**

O'Brien, M.

This is an accepted manuscript of a book chapter published by Routledge in
Communicating Causes: Strategic public relations for the non-profit sector on 5 June
2018], available online:

<http://www.routledge.com/9780815394013>

The WestminsterResearch online digital archive at the University of Westminster aims to make the research output of the University available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the authors and/or copyright owners.

Whilst further distribution of specific materials from within this archive is forbidden, you may freely distribute the URL of WestminsterResearch: (<http://westminsterresearch.wmin.ac.uk/>).

In case of abuse or copyright appearing without permission e-mail repository@westminster.ac.uk

Nonprofit Issues Management: A New Approach to Resist the Label of ‘Risk’

Michaela O’Brien

This chapter looks at the principles behind issues management theories, explores case studies from the nonprofit sector and suggests a new approach that challenges the dominant corporate-centric theories and is more appropriate for nonprofit organisations.

Introduction: am I at Risk, or am I the Risk?

Many core public relations theories, from ethics to stakeholder management, assume a corporate subject and overlook the specific reality of working in the nonprofit sector. Issues management theory shares this approach and is often presented from the business perspective (Jaques 2014, Regester and Larkin 2008, Deegan 2001). Issues management models may omit nonprofit organisations altogether, or feature them primarily as creating risks or issues for the ‘legitimate’ (business) organisation. This corporate-centric approach within mainstream issues management models reduces their usefulness for nonprofit organisations in three ways. Firstly, it sets up an oppositional dynamic between business and nonprofits that seeks to undermine nonprofits. Secondly, the models may focus on issues that pose risks for businesses, but are less of a concern for nonprofit organisations. Thirdly, they have an organisational rather than a societal focus. Issues management is seen as a way of

protecting the reputation of a business, and issues are considered only in terms of their potential (negative) impact on that business, rather than on their potential impact on society. By contrast, nonprofit organisations need to consider both the societal and the organisational impact of issues.

While some aspects of issues management apply across all sectors, existing models do not adequately address the specific challenges facing the nonprofit sector.

Defining Issues: a Sectoral Approach

Issues can be defined in a number of ways. Many authors (Jaques 2014, Cornelissen 2011, Register and Larkin 2008) take a corporate-centric approach. They define issues in terms of reputational risk, and as factors that may damage a company's reputation. In their view, issues are often caused by that company's own activity. These issues include public concern about manufacturing processes or working practices, product failure or product recalls, or other business activity that poses harms to society or the environment – and may therefore result in public policy that adversely affects that business.

Another corporate-centric approach is to define issues as attacks on businesses by nonprofits, including charities, pressure groups, trades unions or non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Register and Larkin (2008) position NGOs as one of the key risks facing organisations, having 'the power to inflict long-term damage on companies' (2008: 12) and stating that 'global companies are the main targets' and

‘direct action campaigns clearly pose threats to reputation risk’ (2008: 13). Jaques (2014) also conceptualises issues in terms of conflict between NGOs and business. He categorises the ‘qualities’ of issues as: emotive; controversial; ambiguous; external; high-risk; policy; ongoing; media and contentious. The first two of these, ‘emotive’ and ‘controversial’, are revealing about the way NGOs are conceptualized in issues management.

Of particular interest is the quality ‘emotive’, which Jaques unpacks as ‘emotions rather than facts and figures often prevail.’ This is key, because NGO challenges to corporate activity are often presented as emotional or factually inaccurate, when they may simply be querying the accuracy of facts presented by the business. Regester and Larkin (2008: 29) claim that NGOs are emotional but businesses’ decision-making processes are rational, technical and scientific. Jaques’ example of a property developer in conflict with the local residents association describes the property developers’ approach as technical and based on fact, while the residents association are described as emotional and depending heavily on opinion. However, while residents associations may draw on their experience of living in a property, they commonly also use technical references to planning and property law. Challenges to fracking and other environmental degradation are also often dismissed as emotive, though environmental NGOs point to scientific evidence to support their claims. This framing of the different qualities embedded in nonprofits as opposed to businesses helps to inform the corporate positioning of NGOs as a troublesome emotional risk.

The quality 'controversial' is also pertinent. Many nonprofit activities necessarily involve challenging corporate or government policy around issues that are sensitive: production chains that are exploitative or damage the environment, for example, or products that may cause health risks. These may certainly be controversial. However, issues management theory tends to focus on that controversy and not on the ethics of the controversial business policy or practice, or the alternatives to it. By labeling issues as controversial, businesses focus attention on conflict between different stakeholders, rather than on examining how business activity has created the issue.

Other authors take a broader view of issues. Cornelissen (2011:180) acknowledges that issues such as obesity or executive pay can exist independently of businesses and be of public concern 'before they become connected to an organisation'. The implication, though, is that these are latent issues and don't require action until they pose a risk to the business. Heath and Palenchar (2009: 27-28) list a number of types of issue that impact business, such as international trade discussions, regulatory standards, workplace regulations and health and safety standards. Several of these impact organisations across sectors. They also identify broader socio-economic issues; for example changes in financial practices, lifestyle, public opinion and infrastructure.

Alternatively, L'Etang (2009: 75) defines issues through a societal rather than purely organisational lens, in terms of public discourse: 'An issue can be defined as a topic of debate, a trend or a recurring theme that moves from the private sphere into the public sphere and on to the media agenda.' Rather than defining issues as risks to a business, she identifies core topics with resonance for large parts of society, in which

organisations from each sector may have a stake or a preferred policy approach. She includes issues such as child obesity, smoking in public places, world hunger and corporate governance in her discussion.

Overall, issues can be defined as involving change. The emergence of new knowledge or technologies; changes in lifestyle or quality of life; changes in public attitudes, priorities or understanding; or changes in political or organisational strategies. This broader definition of issues is more relevant to nonprofits.

Issues Management: a Body of Literature Designed to Neutralize NGOs

Most issues management models focus on the management of issues by business (Jaques 2014, Regester and Larkin 2008) and are characterised by their focus on the organisation and its reputation, rather than on the issue itself. They also tend to conceptualise NGO activities as a risk to business, as an issue to be managed, rather than as activities that proactively address societal issues. Both the models and the proposed corporate responses rarely involve scrutinising or changing policies and practices that are called into question by NGO activities.

Issues management originated in the 1970s, its development prompted by 'the lack of corporate capacity to respond to the influence of activists and other non-governmental organisations' (Jaques 2014:301). For instance, the 1970s saw the emergence of Greenpeace, which aimed to hold governments and businesses to account for policies

and practices which threatened the environment. This may help to explain the focus within issues management theory on a business as the protagonist managing issues, with NGOs portrayed as creating those issues. Influential early theorists such as Chase crystallised this idea, explicitly positioning issues management as a tool to help business influence public policy (Chase 1984 cited in Jaques 2014). L'Etang states that the early literature in this field had 'something of a corporate bias' in which opponents of corporate goals were 'positioned as organisational threats and *othered* as 'activists' with the implication that they were illegitimate' (L'Etang 2009: 84).

Focus on the organisation

Drawing on Chase, Heath and other early architects of issues management models, Jaques describes issues management as 'a management approach to dealing with potential threats and ... a system of proven tools and processes' (2014:311). He outlines three different approaches to understanding issues. The first focuses on conflict and the other two are purely organisational:

1. A contested matter, where policy differences lead to social or political dispute
2. An expectation gap, where the behaviour of an organisation falls short of what its stakeholders expect
3. An impact, where an issue can significantly affect an organisation's operations.

For Jaques, contestation or dispute is problematic because it could jeopardise the way a business operates. His focus is on the business, not the issue itself. This

organisational approach is also evident in Regester and Larkin (2008: 44) who define issues management more narrowly as a business activity carried out to close the expectation gap: 'an issue represents 'a gap between corporate practice and stakeholder expectations'.' Heath and Palenchar (2009: 12) define issues management more broadly as 'a multifunctional discipline that includes the identification, monitoring, and analysis of trends in key publics' opinions that can mature into public policy.' This definition could be applicable to all sectors, as the authors acknowledge, though they consider that nonprofit organisations engage in issues management primarily when they hold corporate actors to account.

Key to understanding issues management literature is the concept of the life-cycle of an issue - there are different models for this, but all include an early opportunity for the proactive researcher who keeps abreast of trends to spot a potential issue and manage it, often through strategic communication, before it builds to a crisis. The difference between issues management and crisis management is acting early and, ideally, preempting the crisis. Indeed, it is common to consider crisis as one stage of issues management. This fits the organisational-focus of corporate issues management models, but is less helpful for considering the societal impact of issues.

How organisations manage issues

Also central to the literature is the process by which organisations manage issues. Jaques (2006: 410) describes this process as being well defined by academics over 30 years as: 'monitoring the environment; early identification of issues; classification and prioritization; taking pre-emptive action; formal planning; setting realistic goals;

organizing an effective process; building coalitions; and assembling and focusing resources.’ Heath and Palenchar (2009: 28-29) outline four stages of issues management which foreground the role of the public relations (PR) practitioner as a strategic manager, placing issues management in an organisational planning context:

1. Strategic business planning - understanding the environment in which the organisation operates and setting goals
2. Strategic issue monitoring – identifying and understanding issues and their implication for the organisation
3. Strategic corporate responsibility adjustment - addressing the legitimacy gap between what an organisation does and the expectation of its stakeholders
4. Strategic communication – using rhetorical and dialogic approaches to debate issues and move towards collaborative decisions.

These four stages could have application across sectors, but they privilege the organisational over the societal dimension. Heath and Palenchar (2009) promote striking a balance between organisational interests and those of the organisation’s stakeholders, claiming that strategic issues management aims to ‘foster a supportive climate between each organisation and those people who can affect its success and are affected by its operations.’ (2009: 9). While this suggests an approach in which the rights of society, stakeholders and businesses are judged of equal merit, the authors

acknowledge that these rights may not align, and that issues management can only reconcile them ‘to the extent possible within current market and public policy forces’ (2009: 38). The reality is that those market forces are likely to privilege investors’ desire for profit over the rights of consumer groups or the workforce. Issues management is brought back from a societal concern to a corporate organisation’s concern. Similarly Jaques (2006, 2010) claims that issues management is now used across sectors but focuses on whether NGOs are pro or anti-business, vastly oversimplifying the reasons why NGOs seek to monitor emerging issues.

An oppositional dynamic

The roots of issues management in the desire by companies to resist NGO challenges to their policies and practice has a deeper impact than just creating a vacuum in theory for the nonprofit PR strategist. They also create issues that NGOs need to manage. Businesses are advised to react to NGO activity in the same way as to a natural disaster: to mitigate damage and get back to business as usual as quickly as possible. Crisis management frameworks that include denial and counterattack (eg Hearit 2001) legitimise the attitude that businesses need not engage with the actual challenge within NGO activities. The emotive language in some literature reinforces this. Regester and Larkin (2008) claim that companies are ‘used to rational decision making’ while NGOs are ‘on a crusade’ (2008: 29-31). They refer to Chase talking about NGO campaigns’ ‘*appearance of legitimacy*’ (my emphasis). This dismissive attitude helps reinforce corporate suspicion of NGOs and a reluctance to reflect on inequitable business policies and practices.

With historical roots as a tool for business to respond to NGO attack, a resulting persistent corporate bias, and a focus on the organisational rather than the societal impacts of issues, issues management models have limited relevance to practitioners in the nonprofit sector.

Other Approaches to Issues Management

The origins of issues management lead the literature to foreground either conflict, or organisational interests. However, nonprofits are not restricted by these defensive origins. For this sector, issues provide a range of opportunities and challenges.

In contrast to the functional school approach of Chase, Register and Larkin and Jaques, L'Etang (2009) has a less corporate focus. Her critical discussion of issues such as health, poverty and corporate responsibility opens up the possibility of an approach that can be useful for nonprofits by foregrounding the societal impact of issues rather than their organisational impact. Also relevant is L'Etang's discussion of risk, which she links closely to issues management, and of Ulrich Beck's concept of the risk society which presents risk as the result or side-effect of globalisation and industrialisation. Demetrios (2013) takes Beck's idea further to consider that the core activity of nonprofits lies in mitigating damage to planet and people created by the business pursuit of profit. This approach turns on its head the dominant model of issues management, in which NGOs create issues for the corporate subject. Drawing on L'Etang and Demetrios we can instead argue that it is businesses, not NGOs, who create risks or issues, as companies push for increasing globalisation.

L'Etang introduces the notion of power, noting that 'some risks are taken by those in power on behalf of others'. Understanding the use or misuse of power, and how to redress imbalances of power, lies at the heart of many nonprofit activities, whether challenging risk-taking powerful businesses (as NGOs do who call to account corporate policies that damage the environment or erode workers' rights), advocating on behalf of those with less power (as charities do who work with the homeless, or survivors of domestic violence), or empowering others to create more social justice in their own lives (as international development organisations do). Power, particularly when misused, or created through hidden routes such as corporate lobbying, is rarely openly acknowledged. Using the concept of power to consider issues management we can see that the conflict so often mentioned in the literature can also be constructed, from an NGO perspective, as challenges to entrenched or misused power.

These writers, from the critical school of PR, create a new way of perceiving issues, by arguing that risk to society is as valid a topic for consideration as risk to a company's reputation. This allows us to move outside narrow corporate-centric definitions of issues management towards a societal approach.

More recently, Somerfeldt and Xu (2015) have considered how nonprofit organisations can approach issues management. Accepting the dominant idea that issues management inevitably includes conflict between activist groups and business, their work focuses on the role of legitimacy in issues management, and the competition between businesses and nonprofits to be seen as the *most legitimate* organisation with

the *most legitimate* proposal for how to treat an issue. Like others, these authors overlook the possibility of issues management existing without conflict. However, their work is useful in several regards. Firstly, it brings some of the attention away from a company's reputation and back onto the issue itself. Secondly, it reinforces the idea that different voices in society can propose solutions for problems. And thirdly, it identifies (drawing on Coombs 1992) that nonprofit organisations are vulnerable to accusations of illegitimacy, particularly when critiquing the legitimacy of others.

Managing issues: when society is the priority

One difference in the approach to issues management by different sectors is that businesses tend to focus on issues management from an organisational perspective. Their main concern is the potential risk to the reputation or bottom-line of the business, with societal impacts either overlooked entirely or seen as subsidiary to business interests. Miller and Dinan (2008) go further, saying that public relations exists to privilege the interest of the corporation over that of society.

By contrast, nonprofit organisations tend to approach issues management as societal rather than organisational in scope. NGOs welcome public debate around issues as an opportunity to represent the interests of those for whom they advocate, and to discuss potential solutions to societal problems, regardless of the role of the individual NGO in those solutions. Debating different perspectives on an issue is an important aspect of a democratic pluralist society, and of NGOs' role within that. Corporate issues

management can be about getting issues *off* the public agenda. NGOs usually want to get an issue *on* the agenda.

Monitoring issues also enables NGOs to identify changes in context. Developments in science, political priorities, societal attitudes and international economics can all impact on health, child welfare, global poverty, animal rights, human rights or environmental protection. These contextual issues can be examined for the new challenges and opportunities they open up for all those working to deliver positive social change in that field.

One useful way to consider issues management from the nonprofit perspective is, therefore, as a way to monitor broad societal, political, economic and technological shifts that impact on the nonprofit's area of interest - rather than their impact on the NGO itself. Identifying an issue becomes the starting point for researching the societal problem or opportunity inherent in the issue itself. Secondary to that is prioritizing the impact of the issue, again looking at the impact on the societal problem or opportunity, *not* its impact on the nonprofit organisation. Only then may a nonprofit develop an organisational strategy around the issue to improve social justice. Such a strategy may involve enabling individual behaviour change (eg encouraging young people to drink responsibly or drive safely), providing service delivery at the point of need (eg foodbanks for those on low incomes), advocacy, or lobbying government for legislative or policy change (eg to reduce sexual harassment). It could also include engagement with a business, either collaborative or confrontational (eg applauding a

corporate's change of policy to encourage others to follow suit, or highlighting a corporate's persistence in pursuing policies that damage the environment).

This range of responses to an emerging societal issue by nonprofits is largely overlooked by issues management literature, with its focus on NGO attack on business, but is discussed more fully in campaigning resources for NGOs such as Lamb (2011) and Stachowiak (2013). Stachowiak identifies 10 different pathways for change. These include framing issues, developing policy options or solutions and change at the individual level. None explicitly outlines corporate engagement, instead discussing the conditions under which nonprofits may collaborate with partners (from any sector) or work with power elites (from any sector). Stachowiak (2013: 1) hints at the complex factors that will determine which route an NGO strategy may take:

'Advocates and funders each come to policy work with a set of beliefs and assumptions about how change will happen, and these beliefs shape their thinking about ... which tactics to undertake in which situations, and what changes need to be achieved along the way.' This nuance is very different from the binary approach of the corporate-centric literature on issues management, and indeed navigating these nuances is one of the main challenges facing nonprofits.

Another difference in the sectoral approach to issues management is that businesses may entrust this role to communications teams. Most NGOs, by contrast, typically include views from advocacy, policy and research, campaigns, public affairs, fundraising and communications departments as well as from service delivery teams on the ground, as the potential impact of the resulting insights go much further than

simply organisational reputational risk. Heath and Palenchar (2009: 12) describe issues management as a 'multifunctional discipline', involving business planning, issues monitoring, CSR and dialogic communication. This idea can be extended for the nonprofit sector, where issues management necessarily involves a whole-of-organisation approach.

A New Issues Management Approach for Nonprofits

The historical roots of issues management in the desire of business to resist activist criticism creates the need for a new approach which more explicitly reflects the goals of nonprofit organisations. This new approach should:

- Reflect nonprofits' core activity; delivering progressive social change
- Identify particular issues that challenge NGOs; in addition to those identified in mainstream issues management models
- Acknowledge that nonprofit activities include challenging power holders, who may react using a variety of responses including counterattack against the NGO rather than addressing the issue itself.

I suggest that nonprofit practitioners undertake issues management in two ways: firstly through applying a societal perspective to issues rather than a solely organisational perspective, and secondly through anticipating and countering attacks on their legitimacy.

Applying a societal perspective to issues monitoring

By participating in a whole-of-organisation approach to monitoring the context of key societal issues from obesity to environmental degradation to poverty, the strategic communications professional inside an NGO will work closely alongside campaigning, policy, research, fundraising and public affairs colleagues to identify, understand and prioritise the factors that influence how key societal issues are perceived, experienced and shaped and their impact on society, whether positive or negative. This aspect of issues management inside a nonprofit differs from conventional issues management in that its focus is societal and not organisational. At this stage, the issues management team are exploring the evolution of, for example, transport, or food production, without being constrained by the relationship between the issue and their own organisation. This aspect is developed more fully in the section above.

Managing the legitimacy gap

The legitimacy gaps for nonprofits have different causes from those experienced by businesses, and can even follow the success of the nonprofit in raising awareness about a societal problem. I suggest that the three main causes of a legitimacy gap for nonprofits are success; the failure to meet expected standards; and the campaigning environment.

Success can make the NGO a target

NGOs face growing restrictions on the right to act in the public interest: to comment, advocate, challenge, hold to account, or campaign. In the UK, the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014 (United

Kingdom 2014) limits the ability of charities to contribute to public debate around issues, particularly in the run-up to a general election (Lamb, 2014). Though originally described as an attempt to address concerns about commercial lobbyists (whom we could compare to issues managers inside businesses), the Act applies to a broad range of nonprofit activity. The retrospective application of the legislation to the snap general election in June 2017 broadened its impact, with the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations noting his concerns (United Nations 2017: 8), and describing the Act as having had ‘a chilling effect on the work of charities during election periods, with many opting for silence on issues they work on.’ The UN report noted that the legislation is not equitable, having more impact on civil society than on businesses, and called on the UK government to review the definition of ‘regulated activity’.

Internationally, the civil society alliance Civicus (2017) reports growing restrictions on NGOs and activists in countries including Ethiopia, Egypt, Turkey and Poland, from government surveillance, detentions and arrests for peaceful advocacy to legislation that restricts campaigning.

Attacks on nonprofits, especially when led by or reported in the media, can challenge their legitimacy by undermining public trust. A 2016 survey by nfpSynergy reported that 70% of journalists covering this sector agreed ‘media scrutiny of charities is here to stay for the foreseeable future’ (Corfe 2016). These stories often conflate the idea of party political activity – which is outside charities’ remit in the UK as defined by the Charity Commission – with activity that is political in the sense that it generates debate about issues which are active in the political arena. This conflation goes largely

unchallenged but underpins attacks by critics. Conservative MP Brooks Newmark, then Minister for Civil Society, told charities in 2014 in a speech not to campaign on issues in the political arena, but to ‘stick to their knitting’.

Failure to meet the standards expected by trustees, beneficiaries and supporters

NGOs can face condemnation for failing to meet the high ethical standards expected by supporters. This may happen when their campaigns cause offense (for example controversial advertisements by children’s charity Barnados attracted complaints), due to accounting and financial failures (such as in the Kids Company) or because of fundraising techniques which breach the public’s view of acceptable levels of intrusion (Bentley et al 2015).

Changes in the campaigning environment and public attitudes to social change

Changes in societal attitudes, and new technology-enabled ways of engaging with politics, can create issues for NGOs, as the expectations of their supporters change. Hypermodern organisations such as Avaaz, 38 Degrees, SumOfUs and Change.Org offer supporters the opportunity to engage in social change communication and lobbying activities without a long-term financial commitment. Supporters can engage on a single issue, at a single point of time. These new organising models pose a risk to existing NGOs’ funding and business models and may threaten their fundraising goals, or at least prompt NGOs to review their mobilising and organising approaches.

The recent surge of interest in social movements such as Occupy, Nuit Debout and BlackLivesMatter and their success in engaging younger activists in innovative and

non hierarchal ways may make NGOs less attractive for the next generation of supporters.

The changing nature of public discourse, reflected in the word ‘post-truth’, poses the challenge of working with extrinsic values when public discourse is increasingly characterised by intolerance and isolationism. Help Refugees and others in the UK and France, for example, face an uphill struggle to combat the toxic public discourse around refugees.

Case study: The British Red Cross and the NHS ‘humanitarian crisis’

Funding for the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK was one of the key issues in the Vote Leave campaign in the run-up to the referendum in June 2016 on whether the UK would leave the European Union (EU). Campaign claims about the additional funding that would be available for the NHS if the UK left the EU influenced the referendum outcome. In the year after that referendum, the NHS remained a high profile and highly emotive issue in public discourse.

On Friday 6 January 2017, following news stories about overcrowding in hospital accident and emergency (A&E) units, and the deaths of two patients after long waits on trolleys in corridors, the British Red Cross issued a news release calling on government to allocate adequate funds for social care to alleviate this pressure. The statement was made in the context of British Red Cross’ provision of a ‘support at home’ service, and drew on their experience of helping to organise social care for patients leaving hospital. Their statement described growing numbers of people being

discharged from hospital without sufficient support, while others who were medically fit to leave hospital were unable to do so because of a lack of social care, exacerbating the delays for those waiting in A&E.

Discussing the statement on Sky News, British Red Cross Chief Executive Mike Adamson described the NHS as facing ‘a humanitarian crisis’. The comment quickly attracted attention, triggering denials from the NHS and from Prime Minister Teresa May. Possibly due to the already high profile of the NHS, the British Red Cross statement stayed in the media spotlight, and Mike Adamson was forced to defend his use of the phrase humanitarian crisis. Political attention grew and opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn challenged the Prime Minister at Prime Minister's Questions on 11 January, where she described the British Red Cross’ comment as ‘irresponsible and overblown’. The focus of the story moved away from the situation inside the NHS to the legitimacy of the charity to comment on the situation in which it was providing services.

The incident was notable for the speed and openness with which the Prime Minister rounded on one of the UK's longest established charities, known more for its service delivery than for controversial campaigning, and attempted to shift the story from one about health and social care to one about the role of charity in commenting on social issues. Rather than engage in a discussion about health policy, the Prime Minister attacked the charity’s ability to speak out at all.

Attempts to restrict the ability of nonprofits to comment on the social issues within which they operate are growing, and form one of the key attacks on legitimacy that nonprofit organisations face.

Sources:

British Red Cross, Daily Mirror, Independent, Business Insider, Twitter

Conclusion

Issues management theory developed in the 1970s to help businesses deflect public concern about the societal impact of their operations, concerns that were often raised by nonprofit organisations. The anti-activist origins of issues management persist to a greater or lesser extent in the generally corporate-centric approach of issues management models today, with their focus on protecting business reputations.

A strategic PR practitioner inside a nonprofit organisation may conduct issues management in two ways. PR practitioners work alongside colleagues from policy, campaigning, fundraising, advocacy and service delivery to monitor and analyse issues, not for the potential risk they pose the nonprofit organisation itself, but for their impact on the people, animals or environments for which the charity advocates. PR practitioners inside a nonprofit, like their colleagues in a business, are likely to face a legitimacy gap at some point in their career. However, these issues are quite distinct

from those faced by their business counterparts, and include attempts by government and media to stifle their ability to campaign or comment on issues of social justice.

Discussion Questions

1. What types of issues might nonprofits working in your field need to monitor?
2. What legitimacy gaps have you noticed?
3. How can nonprofit practitioners keep the focus on the societal implications of issues?
4. How can nonprofits resist being labelled a risk for the private sector?
5. What can private sector practitioners learn from the nonprofit approach to issues management?
6. What other dominant theories overlook nonprofits or cast them as the 'other'?

References

- Bentley, P. et al (2015) <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3083859/Shame-charities-drove-Olive-death-Organisations-exploited-pensioner-s-kind-heart-admit-sending-begging-letters.html> [Accessed 23 July 2017]
- Bienkov, A. (2017) Available at <http://uk.businessinsider.com/theresa-may-red-cross-pmqs-jeremy-corbyn-humanitarian-crisis-in-nhs-2017-1> [accessed 22 July 2017]
- British Red Cross (2017) Available at <http://www.redcross.org.uk/About-us/News/2017/January/Red-Cross-calls-on-government-to-allocate-funds-for-health-and-social-care> [accessed 22 July 2017] and <https://twitter.com/BritishRedCross> [accessed 9, 10 and 11 January 2017]
- Civicus (2017) State of Civil Society 2017 Available at <http://www.civicus.org/index.php/state-of-civil-society-report-2017>
- Cornelissen, J. (2011) 3rd edition, *Corporate Communication, a guide to theory and practice*, Sage
- Corfe, E (2016) Media scrutiny of charities is the 'new normal', says nfpSynergy Civil Society News. Available from <https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/media-scrutiny-of-charities-is-the-new-normal---says-nfpsynergy.html#.VufChicgGSM> [Accessed 15 March 2016]
- Deegan (2001) *Managing Activism: A guide to dealing with activists and pressure groups*, Kogan Page / CIPR
- Demetriou, K. (2013), *PR, Activism and Social Change*, Routledge
- Dinan, W. and Miller, D. (2008) *A century of spin: how public relations became the cutting edge of corporate power*, London Pluto

- Hearit, K.M. (2001) Corporate Apologia, when an organisation speaks in defense of itself in Heath R, (ed) *Handbook of Public Relations*
- Heath, R. and Palenchar, M. (2009) Strategic issues management: organizations and public policy challenges 2nd ed Sage
- Jaques, T. (2014) 3rd ed Issue Management, in Tench, R. and Yeomans, L. (eds), *Exploring PR*, Harlow: Pearson Education, pp 300-312
- Jaques, T. (2010) 2nd ed Embedding Issue Management: from process to policy, in Heath, R (ed), *The Sage Handbook of Public Relations*, Sage Publications, pp 435 - 447
- Jaques, T. (2006) "Activist "rules" and the convergence with issue management", *Journal of Communication Management*, Vol. 10 Issue: 4, pp.407-420
- Lamb, B. (2014) Is charity campaigning under threat from the coalition government? *Voluntary sector review* vol 5 (1) pp 125-138
- Lamb, B. (2011) The good guide to campaigning and influencing, National Council for Voluntary Organisations (Great Britain)
- L'Etang, J. (2009) *Public Relations Concepts, Practice and Critique*, Sage
- Regester and Larkin (2008) 4th ed *Risk Issues and Crisis Management in Public Relations A Casebook of Best Practice* CIPR Kogan Page
- Smith, M (2017) Available at <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/theresa-admits-350-million-pledged-10124021> [accessed 22 July 2017]
- Sommerfeldt, E and Xu, S (2015) Legitimation strategies in radical activist issues management in Waters, R (ed), *Public Relations in the nonprofit sector: theory and practice*, Routledge pp 185-203
- Stachowiak, S. (2013) *Pathways for Change: 10 theories to inform advocacy and policy change efforts*, Centre for Evaluation Innovation
- United Kingdom, *Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014*, chap. 4 (2014). Available from <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2013-14/transparencynonpartycampaigningandtradeunionadministration.html> [accessed 23 July 2017]
- United Nations (2017) A/HRC/35/28/Add.1 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association on his mission to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Available from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session35/Pages/ListReports.aspx> [accessed 23 July 2017]
- Wilkinson, R (2017) Available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/nhs-british-red-cross-chief-executive-mike-adamson-defends-humanitarian-crisis-remarks-a7516751.html> [accessed 22 July 2017]