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Image of a PR Manager

ABSTRACT

The study focuses on the three main types of the image of PR manager - self-image, perceived image and professional image. Its purpose is to identify all the image attributes needed for a position of PR manager. In the theoretical part, image is defined as the combination of both external and internal reflections of an individual, object or company creating values and awareness.

The research part is the application of theoretical principles in the practical operations of three PR managers from the insurance sector and four PR managers from the bank sector. Research is in the form of an 8-question structured interview and qualitative response analyses. The result of the issue is an empirical assessment of the gathered information, studied literature and research. In self-image description the managers describe themselves as creative, systematic, reliable, extrovert, social with excellent communication skills. The perceived image of PR managers requires responsibility, friendliness, helpfulness, politeness and empathy. The professional image of PR managers requires a professional dress code, responsibility, creativity, excellent communication skills, openness to new ideas and experiences. Primary analytical and organizational attributes are considered as an advantage in the profession of PR manager as well.

KEY WORDS

PR manager. Image. Self-image. Perceived image. Professional image.

1. Image

The origin of the word image dates back to the 12th century. It was firstly used in Middle English in the meaning of a mental picture.¹ Later this word was mainly connected to the external appearance of an individual or an object. Today the definition of the word image is varied and depends on the context and the field to which it relates. For example in mathematics image is used as meaning “a set of values of a function corresponding to a particular subset of a domain, computing”;² in economics it represents a symbol or idea of a company, good name, brand awareness and reputation, everything that is involved in the building of a brand;³ its biblical interpretation is relating to “the original after which a thing is patterned”.⁴ In linguistics, marketing and media studies the word image is defined as the complex impression of an individual, an object or a company image of how someone or something appeals to the public; a good name, prestige and reputation. It is a built up expression of a person or an object, the external appearance, behaviour, which defines them;⁵ it represents also the impression that a person, an organization or a product, etc. gives to the public, and produces a strong picture in the mind.⁶ So image does not denominate only external appearance, but is also linked to the interpretation of the inner side of an individual and on intangible values.

In our study, the term image is understood as the complex of both external and internal reflections of an individual, object or company creating values and awareness. It “is created from different sources – from information of other people, from media source and from cursory meeting.”⁷

Each person builds their own image by behaviour, actions and appearance. The image of an individual is not compact; E. Sampson⁸ divides it into three types:

- Self-image,
- Perceived image,
- Professional image.

Self-image reflects the way a person sees themselves including appearance and inner characteristics. Every human being is unique and one’s attributes vary depending on personality. All aspects shape human personality and build the individual. Self-image is built and shaped throughout the whole life and it changes with growing up. According to E. Sampson, self-image is composed of five main integrals: appearance, body language, reputation, communication style, performance.⁹

A PR manager should hold a higher standard in all directions and access their work responsibly. People in management are creative and always open to new experiences, and therefore a person, who neglects or does not know the grammar of their mother tongue, is unacceptable for the position of PR manager. Before a person decides to focus on the position of PR manager they must be aware of their competitions, values, abilities and limits.

Perceived image is based on the effect one has on other people and on their expectations of how the individual should look and how he/she should behave. The perceived image differs also according to the individual’s role in life. Each role (the role of a mother, a daughter, a friend,

¹ Dictionary. In *Dictionary.com*. [online]. [2016-06-18]. Available at: <www.dictionary.com/browse/image>.

² *The Free Dictionary by Farlex*. In *Thefreedictionary.com*. [online]. [2016-06-18]. Available at: <www.thefreedictionary.com/image>.

³ ŠALING, S., IVANOVÁ, ŠALINGOVÁ, M., MANÍKOVÁ, Z.: *Veľký slovník cudzích slov*. Bratislava – Veľký Šariš : SAMO, 2000, p. 531.

⁴ *Bible Study*. In *Ucg.org*. [online]. [2016-06-18]. Available at: <www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/bible-questions-and-answers/what-does-the-image-of-god-mean>.

⁵ *Krátky slovník slovenského jazyka*. Bratislava : VEDA, 1997, p. 209.

⁶ HORNBY, A. S.: *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 646.

⁷ HRADISKÁ, E., HUDÍKOVÁ, Z., ČERTÍKOVÁ, H.: *Praktikum sociálnej komunikácie*. Žilina : Eurokódex, 2013, p. 107.

⁸ SAMPSON, E.: *Jak si vytvořit působivý image*. Praha : Management Press, 2003, p. 43.

⁹ SAMPSON, E.: *Jak si vytvořit působivý image*. Praha : Management Press, 2003, p. 49.

a manager or a business partner) is surrounded by a different group of people, who shape the perceived image. Perceived image can be created also about people we have never met. The image of a famous person is shaped through media, so media public follows and creates an opinion of the famous person without knowing them personally. If a co-worker knows nothing about a colleague's personal life, the perceived image is distorted. The cause of it is when someone appreciates an individual; some disagree and dislike the individual because of a lack of information.¹⁰

In scientific literature, there are described no integrals regarded perceived image. The authors therefore create the basic integrals by themselves. They consider professionalism, reputation, body language and appearance as four essential components of the perceived image of a PR manager.

Professional image is the required type of image. It is created by the idea of the profession and expectations to meet the criteria necessary for a certain position. The idea of a professional image includes social status, appearance, behaviour and skills which are optimal for the work position. Many workplaces offer a manual of how to communicate, how to dress, the steps needed to solve a complaint or how to train and communicate with employees. These manuals go hand in hand with the Ethical Code and no one is allowed to violate it, else the individual is in most cases punished or fired.

Professional image is built throughout the professional job position. Firstly the employee might not meet all of the criteria but courses and training help to achieve the necessitated image. The appearance, communication, clothes, behaviour must be adequate for the professional image. Most times it requires adjusting as it slightly differs from the perceived image of the man.¹¹

The professional image of a PR manager consists of the six main integrals: competence, consistence, trustworthiness, self-confidence, self-control¹² and professional dress code.

2. Survey methodology

The focus of the study is to analyze the image of PR managers, characterize all their components and identify all the image attributes needed for the position of PR manager. To achieve this goal, we have chosen a structured interview with 8 questions of our own construction and a qualitative method of response analyses.

In this research we have engaged a group of seven professional PR managers from the insurance and bank sectors and with extended experience in media and public relations, and their personality attributes based on the components of image. The insurance and bank sectors are both targeted with a high level of professionalism and their PR management actively communicates throughout the whole year. On behalf of Law 122/2013 on the protection of personal data, anonymity has been granted to all PR managers and institutions they represent. All PR managers are therefore lettered A through G. The first three managers (A, B, C) work in the insurance sector and four (D, E, F, G) represent the banking sector. The PR managers of the insurance sectors are women and the PR managers from the bank sector are men, so both genders are represented in the analysis. The authors of this study have chosen only those parts of the responses, which are suitable for the research. The responses were analysed with qualitative methods and with a combination of all the answers, the authors named the basic attributes of the image of a PR manager.

¹⁰ HRADISKÁ, E., HUDÍKOVÁ, Z., ČERTÍKOVÁ, H.: *Praktikum sociálnej komunikácie*. Žilina : Eurokódex, 2013, p. 111.

¹¹ HRADISKÁ, E., HUDÍKOVÁ, Z., ČERTÍKOVÁ, H.: *Praktikum sociálnej komunikácie*. Žilina : Eurokódex, 2013, pp. 108 - 111.

¹² SAMPSON, E.: *Jak si vytvoriť pôsobivý image*. Praha : Management Press, 2003, p. 49.

Survey questions

1. Which of your personality attributes do you consider advantageous and which disadvantageous?
2. How do your colleagues, journalists, business partners perceive you?
3. How does your behaviour differ between your personal life and your professional life?
4. What clothes and in which colours are prevalent in your professional wardrobe?
5. How do you deal with cooperation with other parts of the company, business partners or journalists?
6. How do you suppress negative emotions in dealing with crisis communication?
7. How do you approach deadlines?
8. What attributes do you think a PR manager should have and vice versa which attributes should be eliminated?

Qualitative analyses and comparison of the responses of all the PR managers leads us to the factors of professional objectives and helps us to achieve the main objective of this study - define the image of a PR manager and all the image components. The output of the research is the combination of personal abilities in the profession of the PR manager.

3. Results and discussion

Based on the structured interview and qualitative method of response analyses we analyse the image components of a PR manager, and noted it down in the tables. On the basis of the findings we evaluated the results and attached our own opinions and views on the findings.

We focused on the following image components:

- Self-image,
- Perceived image,
- Professional Image.

The working experiences of questioned PR managers' vary - some of them work as PR managers over a longer term, other are still new to the field. The average length of period of time working as a PR manager is 5 years and 1 month. Six out of seven PR managers were previously working in the media sphere, focused on journalism. The main advantage of previously being a journalist is the ability to know exactly what piece of information journalists seek and in being swift. L. Kopecký¹³ regards media environment knowledge as one of the key features of effective communication.

The first question “Which of your personality attributes do you consider advantageous and disadvantageous?” is aimed at self-image. PR managers are asked to describe how they perceive themselves, and which attributes they see as their key personality characteristics. The second part of the question is to name attributes, which are considered to be a disadvantage for them.

The managers describe themselves as creative, systematic, reliable, extrovert, social with excellent communication skills. While most of the attributes are common for all of the managers, PR manager A and D have a disadvantage in common. Both state consistency as their disadvantage, realizing that attribute, which at first sign seems positive, can have a negative impact in workflow and time management.

¹³ KOPECKÝ, L.: *Public relations. Dějiny – teorie – praxe*. Praha : Grada Publishing, 2013, p. 173.

The first key attribute of a PR manager according to the answers is excellent communication. Communication is the basic tool of human interaction. In companies, it is the tool, which connects people and helps them to achieve goals. In the position of a PR manager, communication is one of the most important tools; in this context V. Svoboda¹⁴ points out these acquirments:

- Clear presentation of company interests and standpoints,
- Respect for opinion of others,
- Prompt reactions to different topics of the conversation,
- Communication of opinions and attitudes,
- Feedback.

Which of your personality attributes do you consider advantageous and disadvantageous?		
	Advantageous	Disadvantageous
PR manager A	Rational, proactive, analytical and organizational skills, strategic thinking, creative, goal seeking, systematic, consistency	Consistency and extended level of responsibility negatively influences time management in some cases
PR manager B	Friendly, social, communicative, punctual, creative, cooperative, open to new ideas, on-timer	Messy when it comes to managing office desk, having too many diaries and not using any of them.
PR manager C	Conscientiousness, reliability, creative, communication skills, creativity	Perfectionism
PR manager D	Extrovert, social, philanthropist, humanitarian, helpful, creative, inventive, ability to express oneself, communicate important messages, think wisely before speaking	Consistency in certain topics.
PR manager E	Consistency, focused on reaching high results, cooperative, inventive, easy to express oneself	Contradictious
PR manager F	Consistency, tidy, punctual, always on time, organized, ready with tasks before deadline	Emotional, sensitive, stressed and unable to depersonalize
PR manager G	Calm, contemplative, emphatic, friendly, agreeable, ability to depersonalize, add value to work	Agreeable, preferring quality over quantity of tasks done

SCHEME 1:

Self-image: Personality attributes

Source: own processing

The second question **“How do your colleagues, journalists, business partners perceive you?”** is focused on the perceived image. PR managers are asked how their colleagues, journalists and business partners perceive them. The question is answered only by PR managers, who ask for the answer from their colleagues. PR managers C and E declined to answer the question. PR manager B uses the quotation from their latest media audit stating, *“They praised her flexibility, responsiveness and rapid response. She appears trustworthy and convincingly. She secures adequate people for answers. She authorizes quickly when needed and quickly draws up things.”* PR manager D directly asked his colleagues to answer these questions and the answer says, *“Creative, opened to new ideas, constructive, healthily ambitious, purposeful, conscientious, diligent, helpful, emphatic, sometimes moody and rude.”* The PR managers that answered the question described themselves as responsible, friendly, helpful, polite and emphatic. According to the perceived characteristics of PR managers, the second attribute is agreeableness and empathy.

¹⁴ SVOBODA, V.: *Public relations. Moderně a účinně*. Praha : Grada Publishing, 2009, p. 121.

To work correctly with media, business partners or within the company, the PR manager has to be emphatic. In this context V. Konečná¹⁵ states that the link between certain personality characteristics and assumptions of PR manager is heading to the ability to lead active, rational, social interactions based on empathic and moral behaviour.

How do your colleagues, journalists, business partners perceive you?	
PR manager A	Responsible, opened to new experiences, always searching for the easiest and most effective solutions in difficult situations, excellent thinker, offering complex solutions
PR manager B	Flexible, helpful, quick responding and reactions, trustworthy, conclusive, giving immediate responses, giving complex answers, meeting deadlines
PR manager C	-
PR manager D	Creative, opened to new ideas, constructive, healthily ambitious, purposeful, conscientious, diligent, helpful, emphatic, sometimes moody and rude
PR manager E	-
PR manager F	Nice, polite, decent, selfless, smart, sometimes scatterbrained and stressed
PR manager G	Calm and friendly

SCHEME 2:

Perceived image: How other people perceive PR managers
Source: own processing

The third question “**How does your behaviour differ between personal life and professional life?**” is focused on the differences in PR managers’ behaviour in personal life and in work. Five out of seven PR managers answered yes, explaining that the job position requires an emotionless attitude towards situations and it is necessary to depersonalize. The managers who answered “no” argue that their behaviour does not differ, but that they have to be more careful with what is being said. The environment, in which they operate, is the main difference between personal and professional life. While at home they can be open and say their own opinion, at workplace it is necessary to think about what is appropriate to say and therefore they lack spontaneity and openness. PR manager F adds that he is more confident and extrovert at work, while it is the opposite at home.

How does your behaviour differ in personal life and professional life?	
PR manager A	Behaving rather rationally at work with a calm head and emotionless
PR manager B	At work more open to compromises, emotionless, required to seek the best solution for the company, more patient
PR manager C	Negative emotions and stress need to be suppressed in professional life.
PR manager D	At work more focused on arguments and explanations, more talkative- More open in personal life.
PR manager E	At work more cooperative and open to cooperation even when being stubborn
PR manager F	More confident and extrovert at work. Thinking twice before saying anything, controlling oneself, being rather professional and emotionless, without a hint of humour.
PR manager G	Not expressing emotions at work as in personal life. More open in personal life

SCHEME 3:

Perceived image: Behaviour differences in professional and personal life
Source: own processing

¹⁵ KONEČNÁ, V.: *Komunikácia vo verejnom styku*. Bratislava : Book & Book, 2012, p. 99.

The fourth question “*What clothes and which colours are prevalent in your professional wardrobe?*” is targeted at the dress code and the professional external image. The contemporary business dress code meets the business dress code analyzed in the theoretical part of the study. All the managers described their wardrobe in detail. The commonly used outfits of PR managers A, B and C are customs, skirts with tops or business dresses, combined with stilettos. While PR managers A and C prefer the pastel colours and tones of gray, PR manager B wears varied colours without any specific limitation. PR managers D, F and G prefer suits in navy blue colours or light shades of gray in combination with a shirt and tie. PR manager E wears casual clothes as business dress code is not required in the company. The only occasion when suit is required, is on a meeting with business partners. In addition, some of the institutions allow casual Friday outfit, when the managers are not required to dress in strict business dress, but the dress code is looser and jeans are allowed.

What clothes and which colours are prevalent in your professional wardrobe?		
	Clothes	Colours
PR manager A	Trousers and skirt customs, business dress, stilettos	Black, gray, pink, beige
PR manager B	Casual clothes, pants, blazers, tops, skirts	Varied colours, combined properly
PR manager C	Shirts, tops, skirt, business dress	Blue, gray, pink
PR manager D	Suits, shirts, ties, leather shoes Friday is casual – jeans with a shirt	Summer – light gray, beige, light blue. Other seasons – dark gray, navy blue, black. Varied colours of ties – 120 different pieces.
PR manager E	Casual clothes – jeans and a shirt. Suits only when formal business meetings, events, meeting with journalists	Varied colours
PR manager F	Suits, shirts, loafers, ties and socks. Friday is casual – light slim fit pants and a shirt with no tie	Suits – navy blue, dark brown dark green. Shirts – white, striped checkered Loafers – gray, black, blue Socks – only black
PR manager G	Suits, pants, jackets, shirts, formal shoes, ties only occasionally	Suits – mostly navy blue Shirt – white, pastel colours Shoes – black

SCHEME 4

Professional image: Dress code of PR manager

Source: own processing

Professional dress code of PR managers in insurance and bank sectors is illustrated in picture 1.



PICTURE 1:

Professional image: Dress code of PR manager

Source: own processing

The fifth question “**How do you deal with cooperation with other parts of the company, business partners or journalists?**” is focused on the key attribute of the PR manager, which is the openness to new ideas, experiences and skills. PR managers often cooperate and collaborate with other departments of the institution, journalists or mass media. Every PR manager should maintain good relations with all departments; openness to new ideas builds stronger relationships within the groups. All of the PR managers are ready to listen to ideas from department members and are open to new ideas. In some cases being proactive is an advantage while creating a topic, but in other cases the role of PR manager is supportive. All of the questioned PR managers are more often in the position of leader of some projects, they are open to new ideas and creativity. All of the PR managers maintain good relations with the journalists by active communication and regular updates on new products or information, offering press releases or additional information when requested.

How do you deal with cooperation with other parts of the company, business partners or journalists?	
PR manager A	Both sides, opened communication, exchange of information, depending on the situation, in some project the leader on other a support. External communication is limited by the standards of the company
PR manager B	Maintain good relations with journalists, keep them updated though press releases, good cooperation
PR manager C	Both sides. Proactive attitude when creating topics from journalists and always ready to answer questions, coordination of PR events, cooperation with other departments
PR manager D	Mainly leader of projects, open to ideas from team members, correct and polite communication with journalists, keeping them updated, good cooperation with other departments, active internal and external communication
PR manager E	Ready to answer questions from journalists or other people and occasionally coming up with ideas, rather preferring cooperation with other departments

PR manager F	Creative, when having the support of leaders, no problem with cooperation with other departments, always open to new ideas from colleagues, polite and correct communication with journalists
PR manager G	Active internal communication and cooperation with other departments, keeping people updated and always discussing everything in detail from the beginning, some tasks are more focused on the PR manager, other on other departments, good preparation and collaboration

SCHEME 5:

Professional image: Cooperation of PR manager

Source: own processing

The sixth question “How do you suppress negative emotions in dealing with crisis communication?” is targeted at another key attribute of the professional image of a PR manager. PR managers are seldom dealing with crisis communication, because every company tries to avoid it, not to ruin its reputation. When crises communication appears in the company, most companies have created a crisis manual, which is followed until the problem is being communicated and solved. PR manager F admitted his personal struggle with handling crisis communication without expressing emotions, and preferring polite communication instead. The rest of the managers deals with crisis communication emotionless and depersonalized, not to give a hint of negativity.

How do you suppress negative emotions in dealing with crisis communication?	
PR manager A	The PR manager follows the rules of the company; professionalism is required and needs to be ready for crisis communication or any other situation.
PR manager B	By investigating the case with all interested parties, keep calm and professional. Take time to find the right solution and communicate it. Negative emotions are noticeable, but never expressed or transferred to others.
PR manager C	Ability to suppress negative emotions and remain calm in crisis communication. The team members in the office can notice stress, but in no way represented to the public or the media.
PR manager D	Professional communicator cannot give clear negative emotions. It is eliminated. Close team members see, when being under pressure.
PR manager E	Negative emotions are being suppressed in external communication, but can be visible during internal communication.
PR manager F	Professional communication with media and publicity but open and emotional communication in confrontation with colleagues.
PR manager G	Following the company crisis manual and solving problems with personal distance, without mixing emotions.

SCHEME 6:

Professional image: Suppression of negative emotions

Source: own processing

The seventh question “How do you approach deadlines?” focuses on further attributes of the professional image of a PR manager. All PR managers admit strict working with schedules and deadlines to hand in work. PR managers B and D prefer to hand the work in ahead if possible. Sometime the situation does not allow the PR manager to be on time, but they approach their work responsibly. PR manager G completes tasks according to their importance; the urgent tasks are done immediately. Any delay is communicated to the business partners. The conscientiousness shows the caution, responsibility and reliability of the PR manager. Their work is done to the highest quality and they always do their best to surpass expectations.

How do you approach deadlines?	
PR manager A	Yes. Deadlines for the transfer of materials, comments on the support or answers journalists and to provide information are clearly given and must comply with them.
PR manager B	Deadlines are followed at all times. If work is done before, it is preferred to pass on in advance. When work is delayed, always give the person notification of the delay.
PR manager C	Mostly following deadlines. Always taking time to analyze the topic in depth to reach high results and positive feedback.
PR manager D	Since leading the department, the main task is to plan and coordinate the workflow of the department. Trying to meet the challenges and hand in work ahead.
PR manager E	Strict adherence to deadlines. Work is being organized but some ideas come spontaneously.
PR manager F	Work is organized and following deadlines. When waiting for the approval of superiors, work can be significantly late.
PR manager G	Often perform tasks according to their immediate priority and urgency. It happens that tasks of low priority and urgency draw up late. Generally, the partners are informed.

SCHEME 7:

Professional image: Conscientiousness of the PR manager

Source: own processing

The eighth question “*What attributes do you think a PR manager should have and vice versa which should be eliminated?*” is focused on the expected qualities of a PR manager. The answers are similar; all of the managers claim the PR manager should be social, creative, with good communication, desire to learn, open minded, empathic without stressing oneself. As negative attributes, the PR managers list poor vocabulary, nervousness, vulgar or arrogant attitude and irresponsibility, which do not appeal in the attributes of a professional PR manager.

What attributes do you think a PR manager should have and which should be eliminated?		
	PROS:	CONS:
PR manager A	experienced/skilled, dignified, pleasantly communicating, clear and easy verbalization, creative, open-minded	reckless, affective, poor vocabulary
PR manager B	creative, innovative, presentational, trustworthy, social, communicative	-
PR manager C	consistent, conscientious, reliable, creative, communicative, desire to learn	-
PR manager D	humility, strenuousness, punctual, determined, healthily ambitious, constructive, creative, innovative, dynamism, positive, the ability to be heard	stressed, arrogant, hiding behind the opinions of others, obsequious
PR manager E	responsible, fair, empathic, respectable	irresponsible, unfair, unrepresentable
PR manager F	presentational, 100% learned Slovak language, social, doing some hobbies/ sport/family (for compensating stress from work), intelligent, social-intelligent, has general overview, empathic, leading, pushy, confident	self-centered, selfish, nervous, vulgar, rude, not trying to look so serious, bossy
PR manager G	extrovert, conscientious, honest, always prepared	introvert

SCHEME 8:

Image of PR manager: Attributes of PR manager

Source: own processing

As the PR managers are chosen according to the quality bar published by the agency VISIBILITY, their subjective opinions the authors consider to be trustworthy and professional.

4. Benefit assessment and recommendations

The main professional role of a PR manager is to maintain good relations with journalists, public, business and industry media. A PR manager develops the marketing communications plan and actively seeks high-level placement in print or online media, creates and coordinates PR activities and events. The main goal of a PR manager's job is to grow brand awareness and strong positioning in the market by monitoring, analyzing and communicating PR results and creating new opportunities by evaluating the gathered results. A PR manager is the communication director and a member of the leadership of the organization with the full trust of management and has detailed information of the organization goals, so he/she can provide relevant and adequate answers to the media and public. The basic job of a PR manager is to maintain good relations with every target group and to create a good reputation for the organization.

To fulfil the standards of a PR manager, the person is expected to reach the behavioural qualities and image to fit the position. The position of a manager is not suitable for every personality. Based on the cognizance gained in structured interviews with a select sample of PR managers agential of the banking and insurance sector, we define the criteria and attributes associated with the image of a PR manager.

According to response analyses, the managers describe themselves as creative, systematic, reliable, extrovert, social with excellent communication skills. They do not consider body language as a separate component of self-image.

The perceived image of PR managers consists of responsibility, friendliness, helpfulness, politeness, appearance and empathy. The main affirmative attributes of PR managers that are appreciated by colleagues are quick responding and reacting to singular situations with complex answers. The importance of trust is of a high level along with antecedence of long term co-working, help, and conclusive vision, bonding and notably meeting deadlines of the projects, campaigns or communication in general.

The professional image of PR managers requires a professional dress code, responsibility, creativity, excellent communication skills, openness to new ideas and experiences. The attributes considered as an advantage in the profession of PR manager are also primary analytical and organizational skills, which are conducive to higher performance and strategic thinking in the communication with media or business partners, moreover in bonding with colleagues and other managers of the company. Being a PR manager is a responsible position for an experienced professional, and their image is transferred to the success of the company.

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