

The Bridge to the Government

An essential specialization within the Public Relations industry is Government Relations, Public Affairs, and Lobbying. Government Relations is the indirect communication between an organization and the government. An organization's desire to communicate with government officials is motivated by its objective to promote its views to influence laws or regulations that could impact its products or services. One of the most effective methods used to accomplish this is to directly communicate with government officials by lobbying, which allows the company's interests to be emphasized to officials as they make important decisions on the laws surrounding this.

While lobbying is an effective way to advocate your company values to the government directly, there are also indirect methods of communication that can be used to get a company's message across to the government. This can be through the media, petitions, campaigns, and more. This indirect form of communication is called Public Affairs. Public Affairs is the communication between the citizens and government. In a government setting, it includes media relations, crisis communications, issues management, social responsibility, public information, and strategic communications advice. As mentioned earlier, lobbying is a tool used by an organization to communicate with its elected officials. This allows the company to directly communicate with politicians who enforce the rules that can impact their business. Lobbying enables them to provide their point of view and ideas on laws and attempt to persuade them to make decisions for legislation that will positively impact their company.

With the success of publicists, government agencies employed public relations professionals to help shape public opinion. However, businesses were worried about the impact this might have because Public Relations professionals were believed to manipulate. So the pressure they put on Congress led to the Gillett Amendment. This was meant to end the government's relationship with Public Relations specialists. Still, because the amendment doesn't prevent the government from communicating with citizens, the term Public Affairs was applied to maintain effective communication between citizens and the government. Lobbying began in Washington D.C. during the 19th century. Political operators would occupy the lobbies of hotels near the White House to gain access and information to the president and members of his staff. They would attempt to discuss politics with these officials in a more relaxed setting. President Ulysses S. Grant referred to them then as lobbyists leading to what they were doing to be called lobbying.

The advantages to specializing in government relations, public affairs, and lobbying are that entry-level jobs are much easier to find. Most Public Relations corporations are searching for applicants with impressive resumes and experience. But in this area of Public Relations, young people with fresh ideas are desired for this job. Working for the government provides stability and security with paychecks, work environment, and benefits. This is a fast-paced but interesting career. An advantage to lobbying is that you can help control the power of the majority. By lobbying, you are making sure that the officials aren't making decisions without reflecting on how the new laws will affect various groups. Some of the disadvantages to specializing in Government Relations, Public Affairs, and Lobbying are that many people believe it's tedious and complicated.

With social media, you have to constantly stay updated on policies and legislation as they are continuously changing. Issues and concerns can surface instantly, which gives corporations less time to develop a response for the media. A significant disadvantage of lobbying is that it might not work. The government officials can easily reject and disagree with what you are presenting. Based on what you share, there is no guarantee that they will listen to you or implement change.

Public Affairs and Government Relations are similar to Issues Management and Crisis Communications. While they respond to slightly different types of crises, both fields require responding and managing problems that may occur. Lobbying is similar to Political Public Relations and Government Public Relations. Both fields work with government officials as Political Public Relations helps candidates get elected where they then go to work with the specialist who lobbies. The difference between Public Relations and Public Affairs is the client's goal. Public Relations works to promote products while representing the company through media, promotions, and events. Public Affairs focuses on policies and issues that are then communicated to politicians to make changes for the public good.

To be successful in Government Relations, there are many essential skills needed. Educating policymakers, keeping clients updated, and lobbying are crucial skills that ensure that policy debates and outcomes reflect the company's view. For both Government Relations and Lobbying, you should have good written and oral communication skills. It's also important to be able to listen to help build strong and personal relationships actively. In Public Affairs, you are constantly communicating, so it's vital to have strong social skills to converse with officials effectively. In addition to having strong social skills, written communication is also critical as

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writing clear and compelling press releases is essential. Analyzing and critically thinking are skills needed to help influence policy as you need to know and understand the conditions affecting the community. The skills required to be a powerful lobbyist include being an active listener, knowing your subject, providing further information, and answering questions.

Government Relations, Public Affairs, and Lobbying have a bright future as this area of specialization is continuing to grow. A survey was conducted to see how valued Government Relations are to American corporations. It was found that Public Affairs and Government Relations are critical to companies that deal with intervention from the government. The importance of Public Affairs has continued to grow as there has been an increase in large corporations resulting in the need for more experts in this area. Lobbying can be a very competitive field, but issues revolving around the government never cease as they continue to grow and become more complicated, causing the need for lobbyists to be more important and prevalent.

Based on my research on Government Relations, Public Affairs, and Lobbying, I am interested in this career path. Before researching, I had a basic knowledge of lobbying as I have experience in doing so. I have personally lobbied my government officials four different times on topics that were very important to me. I loved meeting with my government officials to help persuade them to support the laws and rules that benefited my cause. After researching lobbying, I feel I have a more profound knowledge of the importance of lobbying and skills that will help me effectively lobby. Before researching it for this paper, I did not know much about Government Relations and Public Affairs, but I think it sounds very appealing after my research. A job with the government provides stability with exciting new experiences. I would enjoy

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helping citizens and organizations communicate with the government. Overall, I think Government Relations, Public Affairs, and Lobbying seems to be a desirable field to specialize in for a career.

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