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The First Great PR Man

By Jonathon Hardcastle

PT Barnum (born Phineas Taylor Barnum) is best known for being a great showman who staged elaborate extravaganzas through his world-famous Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus, a top attraction during the latter-1800s. For many of today's PR professionals, he is also the first great PR man.

Barnum first made it to the public eye in 1835 when he staged exhibits showcasing a blind and near-paralyzed African-American woman named Joice Heth whom he claimed was the nurse of George Washington and was over 160 years old. Heth died in 1836 and was declared to be 70 years old. Barnum's hoax was revealed, but this hardly deterred him from a lifetime of similar initiatives.

Starting in 1841, Barnum staged elaborate spectacles in New York that no one had ever seen before, featuring the likes of celebrated midget General Tom Thumb, a Fiji mermaid, the original Siamese twins, Chang and Eng Bunker and a Native American dancer named Do-Hum-Me. In 1871, Barnum took his show on the road, first in America and later around the world with the Barnum & Bailey Circus, whose main attraction was Jumbo, an African elephant. At that point, many considered him the greatest showman of all time.

Barnum's exploits illustrate a fine example of what has become a fundamental belief in today's public relations: "perception" is the key. "It's not what they know, it's what they believe," is how the owner of one New York firm put it recently. Make them believe they are listening to the greatest proposal of all time, and you will have them signing on the dotted line. Make them believe that your product will give them exactly what it is they want and they will scamper to clear out your shelves.

But there is a big difference between PT Barnum and today's professional executives engaged in the PR business: a sense of responsibility in the exercise of his craft. Barnum was the absolute showman, but many of his attractions were mere hoax. Today, no legitimate businessman will have any use for a PR man without credibility, because who would believe someone like that? The savvy PR man knows you can stretch the truth a little and bend it a bit, but you cannot afford to lie.

The First Great PR Man

Public Relations employs several communications tools to make clients perceived a certain way. They issue press releases announcing the client's newest products, latest awards and never-before-seen innovations. They court esteemed members of the press to consider their client in a positive light and to say so in their newspaper columns, TV shows or talk radio programs. On behalf of their clients, they create and support events that portray a carefully-studied image, much like PT Barnum during his heyday. And like Barnum, they try to go about their business with flair.

And although they may admire PT Barnum for his showmanship, they know that you can only go so far in the PR business if showmanship is all you have to offer.

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The Final Authority

By Joyce C. Lock

The Final Authority by Joyce C. Lock

We will all answer to someone, be it foe or be it friend.

But, I'm very happy to say, "We answer to God, in the end."

While others are, much too busy, judging our own very life ...

God, in His mighty great wisdom, has a plan beyond sight.

Though words do not always explain what He has called us to do.

To Him we should ever obey and to always be true.

If we'll only follow Him, we will be blessed with His grace.

If we choose to follow mere man, we'll fall flat on our face.

The First Great PR Man

He's the final Authority, as His Word does plainly say.

If we'll only look to Him; He'll reward on Judgment Day.

The authority God gave man over man, in the Spiritual Kingdom, was done away with in the coming of the Son of Man (Mt. 20:25–28). Christian leaders have no dominion over another (II Co. 1:24a), but are to be helpers of our joy; examples, no longer above us but among us (equal in submission), as a servant instead of a lord (I Pe. 5:2–3).

Being made Bishops of our own souls (I Pe. 2:25), we have both freedom and our own accountability. We can only obey/follow man to the extent man is obeying/ following God. Though leadership is always to be respected and consideration should be given to their words of wisdom (I Pe.5:5); direct access, to God, was provided, through Jesus, and is available to ALL Christians.

When a discrepancy occurs between following man and following God, we must look to the latter. God is a jealous God and requires to be first in all things (Ga.3:28).

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty": freedom to follow Christ (II Co. 3:17). Though fear tries to tell us otherwise, God can be trusted to do battle for us when we take the appropriate stand (II Co. 1:24); wherein we can only 'know' by seeking Him.

If you have been in a position where someone tried to control you, your faith, or your calling (thinking it the will of God to be your Holy Spirit); Paul says not to be too hard on them. They did not know (I Co.2:5–8).

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Joyce C. Lock is a published author, poet, and columnist. In addition, she founded and maintains the email ministries "Heavenly Inspirations" <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HeavenlyInspirations/> and "Share a Smile" <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/smilesaring/> . Joyce's writings encourage us in our relationship with God and each other.



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