

## **WORLD’S “MOST EVIL CORPORATION”? EVALUATING MONSANTO’S PUBLIC RELATIONS IN RESPONSE TO INTENSE NEGATIVE MEDIA COVERAGE**

Ali M. Kanso, The University of Texas at San Antonio  
Ali.Kanso@utsa.edu

Alyssa Gonzales, Field Representative, Google Fiber  
alyssagonz09@gmail.com

### **ABSTRACT**

Monsanto, a sustainable agriculture company, has become widely known for its dark history of polluting the environment, mislabeling products, and suing customers. Activists and humanitarians have protested the company’s practices, and customers have boycotted its products. As a result, intense negative media publicity has portrayed Monsanto as being a greedy, unethical, and arrogant monopoly. The company ignored, in the past, various kinds of criticism but now is forced to confront its 2011 title as the world’s “most evil corporation.” This study assesses Monsanto’s public relations efforts in the last four years to repair its badly-damaged reputation. The authors note that important publics have been ignored and objectives have not been well articulated in the process of rebuilding the company’s reputation. They also propose a long-term plan to minimize deeply-rooted beliefs against Monsanto. The plan sets up specific and measurable objectives and suggests research methods and tools to evaluate the outcome.

*Keywords:* Corporate reputation, negative publicity, pollution, and agriculture

### **INTRODUCTION**

Monsanto's company reputation has been severely damaged for its lack of genuine public relations efforts, especially in the last four years. Gathered from available data, it is evident that the agriculture company has recently confronted its public image issue and begun to: (1) implement a reactive approach through communicating with certain publics, (2) increase informational events, and (3) recognize the public opinion. However, consistent dedication to genuine public relations efforts is seriously needed to help salvage Monsanto’s reputation.

### **SITUATION ANALYSIS**

Monsanto, the world’s largest seed company, has become widely known for polluting the environment, mislabeling products, and suing customers. The company has received intense negative media criticism, which damaged its reputation. Monsanto was established in 1901 with its first product being the artificial sweetener saccharin. Almost two decades later, it expanded into the production of basic industrial chemicals. During the Second World War, Monsanto contributed to research for the Manhattan Project which later led to the construction of the atomic bomb. In the 1940s, Monsanto became a leading manufacturer of synthetic fibers and plastics. The company

continued to operate a nuclear facility for the U.S. government until the late 1980s and years later it emerged as one of the top 10 U.S. chemical companies (Monsanto, A history, 2009).

### **Problem Statement**

Since the exposure of the company's alleged unethical customs, Monsanto has developed a poor reputation as being a greedy, unethical, and arrogant monopoly. The firm has lost the trust, business, and support of many people. In 2009, Monsanto profited 2 billion dollars, but a year later its profits decreased to 1 billion dollars after humanitarian activists exposed some of the allegedly unethical practices of the biotech company (PAN North America, 2010). This biotech giant company, which is responsible for genetically modifying much of the nation's and world's crops, reported a 34% fall in earnings in the fourth quarter of 2014 (Barrett, 2015). Activists and humanitarians have constantly protested to diminish the use of Monsanto products, customers have declined in number, and lawsuits have increased. The company, which ignored criticisms in the past, is forced now to confront its 2011 title as the world's "most evil corporation" (Sheets, 2013).

### **History and Company Background**

Monsanto is headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri and has multiple locations in various regions, including Central America, South America, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa (From the Inside Out..., 2014). The company markets its products to farmers around the world in general, and in America and Europe in particular. Following its involvement in the Second World War, Monsanto diverted to the use of chemical pesticides in agriculture. The company's major agrochemical products include the herbicides 2,4, S-T, DDT, Lasso and Agent Orange. The latter was widely used by the United States government during the Vietnam War but became later highly carcinogenic. Monsanto was a key defendant in a lawsuit filed by Vietnam War veterans who faced incapacitating symptoms ascribed to Agent Orange exposure. Monsanto memos revealed that the company was aware of the dioxin contamination included in Agent Orange that was sold to the U.S. government for use in Vietnam (Monsanto: A history, 2009).

When Agent Orange was banned in the United States, Monsanto created in 1976 the weed killer "Roundup" to replace its widely criticized herbicide, Lasso. Roundup assisted in making Monsanto the world's largest producer of herbicides. Although the success of Roundup generated business for Monsanto, the company was still recognized as a major producer of dioxins and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) that caused risks to the environment and human health. Lawsuits and environmental cleanup costs began to flood Monsanto and posed a serious threat of bankruptcy for the agriculture company (Tokar, 2011).

In 1998 Monsanto agreed to pay a penalty of \$225,000 for mislabeling its Roundup herbicide products. The company violated the worker protection standards of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide & Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) for distributing mislabeled Roundup herbicide containers in at least 75 instances. The Roundup-producing company mismarked the label to incorrectly state a restricted entry interval of four hours rather than the correct directions to "restrict entry into a treated area for 12 hours (Monsanto pays penalty..., 1998).

After the success of its products in the United States, Monsanto anticipated a flourishing market with European farmers. Several UK farmers participated in the early field trials of genetically modified organism (GMO) but when negative public opinion on the GMO issue surfaced, these farmers began to grow skeptical about buying and planting Monsanto seeds. In recent reports, Monsanto revealed a future plan to invest heavily in its European seed business to increase sales of its other products after it ceased development of genetically modified crops in the European Union. However, a high opposition to the technology was hurting its commercial prospects (Monsanto to grow..., 2013).

Today, Monsanto operates mostly as a sustainable agriculture company that delivers products to farmers around the world. Its leading seed brands include cotton, oilseeds, fruits and vegetables while its prominent manufactured products involve Roundup and other herbicides. The company has a history of licensing its seeds and technologies to other business firms and has fostered a reputation for suing small farmers who use its seeds in violation of contract. On May 13, 2013, the Supreme Court upheld decisions of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana and the Federal Circuit Court that ordered Indiana farmer Vernon Bowman to pay Monsanto over \$80,000 for planting the company's genetically modified soybean seeds that were purchased from a grain elevator rather than from Monsanto itself (Supreme Court of the United States, 2013). The company has successfully argued that millions of dollars are spent on developing new crop variations and that these products should be viewed as proprietary developments with full patent protection (Schiffman, 2013). Monsanto seeks to provide solutions to environmental issues by developing seeds and systems to help farmers and create better seeds and systems to grow more nutritious food while also conserving natural resources.

On its official website, Monsanto claims commitment to "participating constructively and transparently in the political process, as such participation is essential to the company's long-term success." (Monsanto Political Disclosures, 2015, para. 1). The Board of Directors established the Good Government Fund Advisory Panel (GGFAP) to manage the company's contributions to political candidates in states where offerings are allowed (Monsanto, Political Disclosures, 2015).

The company has the Monsanto Citizenship Fund (MCF), a political action committee that contributes to political candidates "in a manner that is compliant with all applicable U.S. federal and state laws and reporting requirements" (Monsanto, Political Disclosures, 2015, para. 10). The contributions of this committee are funded through donations made by eligible Monsanto employees, according to the official website. The MCF supports political issues and candidates parallel with the company's policy objectives, endorses the election of responsible, qualified candidates to public office, and supports candidates for office, political parties, or other political committees in cases where the views of those candidates or entities are in general agreement with those of the company (Monsanto, Political Disclosures, 2015).

### **Public Perceptions of Monsanto**

In its yearly ranking of ethical performance of multinational corporations, the Swiss research firm Covalence revealed that Monsanto was considered the least ethical company in the world. The research firm collected quantitative and qualitative data about 581 companies. The data incorporated 45 criteria regarding labor standards, waste management, human rights records,

media, industry, and NGO documents (Kiser, 2010). A year later, the website *NaturalNews* conducted an online survey that asked readers to nominate the "World's Most Evil Corporation". About 51% of more than 16,000 people who participated in the survey rated Monsanto as the "Most Evil Corporation of the Year" (Adams, 2011). Still a more recent poll organized by *NaturalNews* named Monsanto again in 2013 as the "most evil corporation" (Sheets, 2013). One may argue that *NaturalNews* is inclined to ranking Monsanto as evil. However, we noted that various reputable media reported its research findings.

### **MONSANTO'S PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORTS**

In 2008, the release of the film *Food Inc.* marked a media monsoon of negative publicity for Monsanto. The documentary, directed by the Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Robert Kenner, concluded that agribusiness produces food that is unhealthy, environmentally harmful, and abusive of both animals and employees. A segment of the film portrayed Monsanto as the corrupt contender in the warfare on food. This caused backlash from educated eaters, health-conscious citizens, environmentalists, and food advocates (Sheets, 2013). Since then, Monsanto has been continuously criticized and accused of being a highly unethical company, causing its image to steadily decline.

Monsanto has maintained a reactive public relations approach. Publics have observed that key officials in the previous Monsanto administration were known for avoiding criticism and unwilling to address challenges to the company (Hopkinson, 2013a). Following a year of ceaseless bad publicity in 2013, Monsanto relied more on its public relations staff and FleishmanHillard, one of the nation's largest public relations firms (Hopkinson, 2013b). Robert Fraley, executive vice president and chief technology officer at Monsanto, stated that the company has "been absolutely riveted and focused on giving technology and tools to farmers to improve their productivity and yield and [they] haven't spent nearly the time [they] have needed on talking to consumers and talking to social media and really intercepting this "opposition to biotechnology" (Hopkinson, 2013b, para. 5).

Monsanto is focusing now on contesting negative public opinion of the company's practices and its biotechnology. The corporation has recently recognized that the negative attention can influence future policy decisions, sales, and operations. Monsanto has been associated with several out-of-house public relations firms including: Burson Marsteller, Global Access Limited, Bivell Woodings Ltd, Bell Pottinger Good Relations UK, Focus Communications and Bartle Bogel Hegarty UK (Monsanto: Influence/lobbying, 2005).

### **Actions and Special Events**

Monsanto made intensive lobbying efforts in Congress, especially between 2008 and 2012. Such efforts resulted in the enactment of what is called "Monsanto Protection Act." President Barack Obama signed on March 26, 2013 the Act into law which states that even if future research shows that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and genetically engineered (GE) seeds cause significant health problems, the federal courts can no longer have any power to stop their spread, use, or sales (Monsanto Protection Act..., 2013). More than 250,000 Americans urged President Obama to veto the Monsanto Protection Act but their insistence had no effect (Obama signs Monsanto..., 2013).

Monsanto collaborated with "conservation partners" including the Nature Conservancy, National Audubon Society, Iowa Soybean Association, and the American Corn Growers Association to illustrate to customers that the company values community relations. The agriculture firm hosted its first "Honey Bee Health Summit" in June 2013. The summit was a gathering at the company's headquarters in Missouri which included scientists and groups of beekeepers who advocate safety of bees (Towers, 2013).

Monsanto implemented a plan on college campuses to fund research and communication programs. It also launched a website called "GMO Answers" to contest misconceptions of genetically modified organisms ("GMO Answers: website...", 2013). In addition, Monsanto held its 5th annual contest searching for "Farm Mom of the Year" to recognize the vigorous efforts of farm moms. The company opened nominations for the contest from February to March 2014, and anyone could nominate his/her favorite farm mom for a chance to win up to \$10,000 (Monsanto opens search..., 2014).

Monsanto announced the launch of a "listening tour" in Hawaii to improve relations with its neighbors and to provide a better understanding of the company's farming practices and products. The firm attempted to identify the community's concerns and build better relations with the neighbors. The community efforts began with the launch of a web portal, [monsantohawaii.com](http://monsantohawaii.com), designed to make people more capable of learning about Monsanto and to encourage them to ask questions about the company's operations and practices. As part of this effort, Monsanto Hawaii attempted to increase farm tours, hold more community meetings and forums, and organize programs to inform the company's direct neighbors about its daily operations (Cocke, 2014).

Monsanto held a press conference in February 2014 at the Commodity Classic Show in San Antonio, Texas to publicize the recently-announced Soil Health Partnership (SHP) that intends to measure and communicate the economic and environmental benefits of different soil management strategies and to help farmers improve the productivity and sustainability of their farms (New partnership aims..., 2014).

### **Use of Controlled Media**

Monsanto used a wide variety of media but relied heavily on controlled media to communicate messages to target publics and to highlight its benefits to consumers worldwide.

**Official website.** Monsanto created a tab on the top of its official website titled "Newsroom". The tab contains official publications involving news releases, social media, and recognition.

**Online discussion forum.** Monsanto helped launch a website called "GMO Answers" that provides information on biotechnology. On this website, visitors can ask questions, explore basic information, and review studies and articles regarding biotechnology.

**Lectures and seminars.** Monsanto held summits with its conservation partners, such as the "Honey Bee Health Summit" where beekeepers provided information about the effects of biotechnology on the safety of bees.

**Twitter.** Monsanto established a Twitter account to discuss its community involvement, highlight its awards, and publicize articles on GMOs, and other relevant topics.

**Promotional videos.** Monsanto has set up a YouTube account to post promotional videos that discuss how the company has improved people's lives in other countries, and to disseminate facts on GMOs and the importance of Monsanto farmers.

**Television commercials** Monsanto made television commercials portraying farm families affiliated with the company as producers of everyday items like food, fuel, and clothes. The commercials, which were aired on Spike TV, depicted the company as an "American farm family" that takes a great care to grow quality products for its customers.

### **Use of Uncontrolled Media**

**Press releases to online publications.** Monsanto sent an array of press releases to online publications (such as BUSINESS WIRE) to communicate details of special events and contests.

**Photo opportunities at special events.** Monsanto organized photo opportunities at many of its special events and press conferences.

### **Target Publics**

While Monsanto organized various kinds of public relations activities to help salvage its public image, it did not come up with any list of target publics. However, in scrutinizing these activities, one can conclude that the company made efforts to reach individuals and organizations that generate a wide range of opinions. These included: current customers, future customers, environmentalists, mass media, university agriculture departments, and government. The following is a profile of each public that Monsanto targeted:

**Current customers.** These people include small farmers around the world who do business with the company either through the purchase of the biotechnology seeds or crop protection products.

**Future customers.** This group involves small farmers who might be interested in doing business with Monsanto but are unsure of trusting the company due to a negative public image.

**Mass media.** These sources consist of online publications and national print and broadcast media. They are powerful in influencing the public opinion.

**Environmentalists:** These individuals are capable of grabbing the media attention through protests and rallies against Monsanto. They can also contribute to negative publicity.

**University agriculture departments.** These departments assist Monsanto in affecting followers and associates. They may also help build community relations.

**Government representatives.** Monsanto's rapport with government of foreign countries is vital to selling the company's products in these countries. These representatives have voices in enacting laws and regulations that diminish restrictions against foreign products.

## Messages

Three main messages have been drawn from the gathered information on Monsanto's actions and program efforts:

- Monsanto is dedicated to America's fans and offers a wide array of food choices.
- Monsanto focuses on sustainable agriculture for a better future.
- Monsanto delivers agricultural products that support farmers around the world.

## Theme

"Dedicated to sustaining the future"

This theme summarizes what Monsanto has sought to convey to the target publics through its public relations efforts.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

Monsanto missed the opportunity to use credible sources and verbal/nonverbal cues to communicate its messages to targeted publics. Only in very few instances, the company followed a two-way communication approach through the creation of a website that allowed visitors to ask questions. Monsanto did not use opinion leaders to sway consumers but it allowed audience participation through social media comments and questions posted on its websites.

Monsanto used the press agency/publicity model, the oldest practice of public relations. The flow of communication was mainly one-way: from the company to targeted publics. The company sought assistance from highly-recognized public relations firms to revamp its tarnished reputation but it was ill advised to rely heavily on publicity for persuasion and manipulation. Modern public relations practice calls for acknowledging public concerns and maintaining an open dialogue between the organization and its constituent publics to secure a satisfactory solution for all parties (Broom & Sha, 2013).

Undoubtedly, Monsanto's tarnished reputation is a very serious problem. Altering negative perceptions requires long-term planning. Sole reliance on publicity to improve reputation is myopic. In fact, in Monsanto's case, the publicity aspect has aggravated the situation and deepened the mistrust between the company and its customers. We believe that four actions require immediate attention from Monsanto as a first step to help solve the reputation issue. The actions are: (1) extending the target public list, (2) establishing specific, measurable and time-bound objectives, (3) articulating the research methods and tools to assess the outcome of actions, and (4) implementing the public information and the two-way symmetric models of public relations.

## Extended List of Target Publics

In our analysis of Monsanto's activities we noted that six important groups of publics were overlooked in the process of revamping the company's reputation. These groups are: scientific experts, organic consumer associations, security and conservation organizations, community

leaders, shareholders, and employees. The following is a brief explanation of the necessity to include each of the six groups in Monsanto's future public relations activities:

**Scientific experts.** These people bring together observations, knowledge and data to help solve problems, invent solutions and develop new products. More importantly, they lend credibility in solving disputes between Monsanto and its constituents.

**Organic consumer associations.** It is very essential for Monsanto to cooperate with these associations that address crucial issues of food safety, industrial agriculture, genetic engineering, children health, and environmental sustainability.

**Food security and conservation organizations.** These entities play essential roles in educating worldwide consumers about food production and management of plant genetic resources.

**Community leaders.** It is important for Monsanto to target prominent community leaders who can convey messages to certain publics and sway their opinions.

**Shareholders.** They are the ultimate decision-makers who can determine the direction and operations of the company. They are also responsible for liabilities and budget.

**Employees.** They represent the company on a daily basis. Informing them of changes, procedures, and pertinent issues will enhance the company's production and morale.

### **Specific, Measurable and Time-Bound Objectives**

The most important aspect of any public relations activity is the objectives. They enable practitioners to show whether they have achieved what they set out to achieve, and thereby demonstrate accountability. In our review of Monsanto's work to refurbish its reputation, we did not find a single document that articulates the public relations objectives for the agriculture company. Thus, we propose below a set of specific, measurable and time-bound objectives. We have reviewed hundreds of public relations case studies in textbooks and trade journals to establish realistic objectives that Monsanto can pursue and we have considered the magnitude of the issue along with Monsanto's resources to implement such a plan.

#### ***Informational objectives***

1. To establish awareness of safety hazards and precautions of Monsanto products among 65% of current customers within the next two years.
2. To create awareness of the benefits of using Monsanto products among 50% of future customers within the next two years.
3. To create awareness of Monsanto's campaign on college campuses among 35% of university agriculture departments within the next two years.
4. To establish awareness of Monsanto's partnership with conservation groups among 60% of national environmentalists in two years.

5. To establish awareness of Monsanto's political involvement among 70% of government legislators within the next two years.
6. To inform 70% of online publications and national print and broadcast media of special events that advocate sustainability demonstrated by Monsanto in two years.
7. To inform 80% of food security and conservation organizations of Monsanto's compliance with regulated policies and procedures in the food production process within the next two years.
8. To establish contacts with 60% of organic consumer associations to inform them of the company's policies regarding food safety and children's health within the next two years.
9. To keep 50 community leaders informed of the company's efforts to solve safety hazard issues within the next two years.
10. To update all shareholders of disputes with government and media.
11. To keep all employees informed of policy changes and new procedures all the time.

***Attitudinal objectives***

1. To diminish the perceived health dangers of Monsanto products among 55% of current customers in two years.
2. To generate positive perceptions of Monsanto's community relations among 50% of current customers within two years.
3. To reduce the perceived health dangers of Monsanto products among 35% of future customers within two years.
4. To create positive perceptions of Monsanto's community relations among 40% of environmentalists within two years
5. To generate positive attention among 45% of national media gatekeepers through social networking within two years.
6. To enhance morale among 80% of the employees in two years.

***Behavioral objectives***

1. To reduce turnover rate among current customers by 30% within the next two years.
2. To convince 25% of potential customers to buy Monsanto products within the next two years.
3. To increase Monsanto's sales volume by 15% in two years.

4. To increase the level of participation of agriculture faculty in campaign activities by 20% in two years.
5. To decrease protests and rallies among 20% of environmentalist groups within the next two years.
6. To recruit three scientific experts to explain to consumers new solutions to food related problems in the next two years.

***Output objectives***

1. To decrease negative publicity of Monsanto brand among 35% of targeted media within two years.
2. To place four advertisements in print and online media promoting the virtues of farmers in two years.
3. To distribute press releases to various media in two years.
4. To hold four press conferences in the next two years.
5. To increase positive attention among 40% of media through Twitter within a two-year period.
6. To generate 80,000,000 media impressions in two years.

**Methods and Tools to Assess the Outcome**

There is no evidence that shows whether Monsanto has done anything to assess the outcome of its activities. It is clear that sales have declined in recent years but sales records should not be a sole indicator in measuring the effectiveness of any campaign. Sometimes social, political and economic factors influence the company's sales volume. The examination of these factors is beyond the scope of this study. In our part, however, we propose specific research methods and techniques to determine after the campaign implementation of the objectives have been met, unmet or exceeded expectations. The following section lays out the techniques and procedures for evaluation in the final stage of the campaign.

***Informational objectives***

- Call a sample of 500 current customers inquiring about their awareness of product safety hazards after two years.
- Conduct a phone survey with a sample of 800 potential customers to measure their level of awareness of Monsanto's product benefits.
- Organize face-to-face interviews with a sample of 300 faculty members to measure their level of awareness of Monsanto's campaign on college campuses after two years.

- Conduct an online survey among 300 environmentalists to measure their level of awareness of Monsanto's partnership with conservation groups after two years.
- Personally contact government legislators to determine their level of awareness of Monsanto's political involvement.
- Contact representatives of national and international media to measure their level of awareness of the special events that Monsanto organized in two years.
- Keep record of representatives of food security and conservation organizations, organic consumer associations, and community leaders contacted in two years.
- Keep a file of all forms of communication passed to shareholders about disputes with legislators.

***Attitudinal objectives***

- Conduct online and telephone interviews with a sample of 800 current customers to measure their perceptions of the health dangers of Monsanto products after two years.
- Construct online and telephone interviews with 1000 potential customers to measure their perceptions of the health dangers of Monsanto products.
- Manage telephone interviews (before and after) with a sample of 300 environmentalists to gauge their perceptions of Monsanto in two years.
- Contact 200 media gatekeepers to determine their level of attention to stories originated by Monsanto.
- Mail a questionnaire to all employees (before and after the campaign) to determine if their morale has improved.

***Behavioral objectives***

- Scrutinize sales of Monsanto products (before and after) among current customers within the next two years.
- Check sales records of Monsanto products among new customers within the next two years.
- Observe the level of involvement among university agriculture departments to measure their participation in campaign activities within the next two years.
- Monitor the number of protests organized by environmentalists to determine changes in their behavior in two years.
- Review the company's record to investigate if scientific experts have been recruited.

### ***Output objectives***

- Monitor and analyze the content of news articles about Monsanto published and broadcast in two years.
- Record the number of advertisement appeared in print and online media in two years.
- Keep track of the number of press releases distributed nationally and internationally in two years.
- Document the number of press conferences held to announce community relations' activities in two years.
- Check the number of "followers" and "retreats" on Twitter to measure levels of positive attention among social media.
- Screen national and international media to calculate the number of impressions generated by their coverage of Monsanto's activities in two years.

### **The Use of Public Information and Two-Symmetric Models**

We believe that the public information and the two-way symmetric models of public relations should guide Monsanto's future public relations practices. In the first model, the main purpose of public relations is the dissemination of true information, not necessarily with a persuasive intent. The main task of the public practitioner is to report objectively about the organization to its publics. In the two-way symmetric model, communication flows both to and from publics – it is more of a dialogue than a monologue. Ideally, both the organization and the public are expected to change as a result of the public relations efforts. The practitioners here serve as mediators, not publicists, between the business firm and its public(s). Their ultimate goal is to create and maintain mutual understanding between both parties. Research plays a very important role in the two-way symmetric model. Public relations practitioners are expected to conduct formative research to help them identify the public concerns and choose objectives before initiating any public relations activity. They are also anticipated to do evaluative research to find out if objectives have been met after the campaign implementation (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). In other words, the research can be used here to counsel Monsanto's management on public reactions to its policies and how these policies can be changed to serve the public interest, and ultimately, to help alter negative reputation.

### **CONCLUSION**

Monsanto's reputation has been severely damaged. The agriculture company has attempted to confront the public image issue but most of its activities are aimed at generating media publicity. Monsanto seems to have been shooting in the dark by: (1) ignoring important groups of publics, (2) pursuing unspecific and non-measurable objectives, and (3) unaccommodating consumers' wants and needs. The company still has a chance to salvage its tarnished reputation but it must

implement genuine public relations efforts to rebuild trust with its constituent publics. The efforts should be guided by the public information and the two-way symmetric models of public relations.

Today's competitive business environment requires communication managers to demonstrate in a measurable way how the outcome of a public relations program actually benefits their organizations (Austin & Pinkleton, 2015). In fact, all types of companies are under mounting pressures from a host of stakeholders to seriously consider their interests and needs. Effective public relations largely depends on designing and implementing a well-crafted public relations plan. Reputation management is currently the most important theme in corporate and organizational communication. It can be monitored and measured. Is "the world's most evil corporation" willing to consider the interests of its customers first and foremost in the process of altering their negative perceptions? It remains to be seen.

### REFERENCES

- Adams, M. (2011, January 10). Monsanto voted most evil corporation of the year. *Natural News*. Retrieved from [http://www.naturalnews.com/030967\\_Monsanto\\_evil.html#](http://www.naturalnews.com/030967_Monsanto_evil.html#)
- Austin, E. W., & Pinkleton, B. E. (2015). *Strategic public relations management: Planning and managing effective communication programs* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Barrett, M. (2015, January 13). Monsanto earnings fell 34% as farmers reject GMO crops. *Natural News*. Retrieved from <http://naturalsociety.com/monsanto-earnings-fall-34-farmers-reject-gmo-crops>
- Broom, G., & Sha, B-L. (2013). *Cutlip and Center's effective public relations* (11<sup>th</sup> ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Higher Education.
- Cocke, S. (2014, January 27). Monsanto launches community engagement campaign. *Civil Beat*. Retrieved from <http://www.civilbeat.com/2014/01/monsanto-launches-community-engagement-campaign/>
- From the inside out: Monsanto corporate social and sustainability report. (2014). Monsanto. Retrieved from <http://www.monsanto.com/whoweare/pages/corporate-sustainability-report.aspx>
- "GMO Answers" website launched by Monsanto, DuPont, More. (2013, July 29). *Reuters*. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/29/gmo-answers-website\\_n\\_3671483.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/29/gmo-answers-website_n_3671483.html)
- Grunig, J., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing Public Relations*. New York: Rinehart and Winston
- Hopkinson, J. (2013a, November 29). Monsanto confronts devilish public image problem. *Politico*. Retrieved from <http://www.politico.com/story/2013/11/monsanto-agriculture-image-problem100442.html>

- Hopkinson, J. (2013b, November 30). Monsanto hires PR firm to fool public, combat image as. *Popular Resistance*. Retrieved from <http://www.popularresistance.org/monsanto-hires-pr-firm-to-fool-public-combat-image-as-most-hated!>
- Kiser, G. (2010, March 30). The 12 least ethical companies in the world: Covalence's ranking. *Huff Post Business*. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/01/28/the-least-ethicalcompani\\_n\\_440073.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/01/28/the-least-ethicalcompani_n_440073.html)
- Monsanto: A history. (2009, February 6). *GMWatch*. Retrieved from <http://www.gmwatch.org/gm-firms/10595monsanto-a-history>
- Monsanto: Influence/lobbying. (2005, May 2005). *Corporate Watch*. Retrieved from <http://www.corporatewatch.org/company-profiles/monsanto-influence-lobbying>
- Monsanto opens search for 2014 “Farm Mom of the Year”. (2014, February 27). Monsanto. Retrieved from <http://news.monsanto.com/press-release/recognition/monsanto-opens-search-2014-farm-mom-year>
- Monsanto pays penalty for mislabeling herbicide. (1998, March 30). *ICIS Chemical Business*. Retrieved from <http://www.icis.com/resources/news/1998/03/30/86880/monsanto-pays-penalty-for-mislabeling-herbicide/>
- Monsanto, Political Disclosures. (2015). Retrieved from <http://www.monsanto.com/lwhoware/pages/political-disclosures.aspx>
- Monsanto Protection Act signed by Obama, GMO Bill “written by Monsanto” signed into law. (2013, May 25). *Global Research*. Retrieved from <http://www.globalresearch.org>
- Monsanto to grow European seed business after GMO pullout. (2013, July 18). *Reuters*. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/18/monsanto-europe-idUSL6NOF03TB20130718>
- New partnership aims to improve soil health. (2014, February 28). Monsanto Spotlight. Retrieved from <http://news.monsanto.com/news/new-partnership-aims-improve-soil-health>
- Obama signs Monsanto Protection Act! Betrays America – It’s time to label GMOs! (2013, March 27). *Food Democracy Now*. Retrieved from <http://www.fooddemocracynow.org>
- PAN North America (2010, July). Monsanto corporate profile. Retrieved from <http://www.panna.org/resources/corporateaccountability/profiles/monsanto>
- Schiffman, R. (2013, June 20). Evil Monsanto aggressively sues farmers for saving seeds. *AlterNet*. Retrieved from <http://www.alternet.org/food/monsantos-rural-police-state>

Sheets, C. A. (2013, June 10). Monsanto named 2013's 'most evil corporation' in new poll. *International Business Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.ibtimes.com/monsanto-named-2013s-most-evil-corporation-new-poll-1300217>

Supreme Court of the United States (2013, May 13). *Bowman v. Monsanto Co.*, 133 S. Ct. 1761.

Tokar, B. (2011). Monsanto: A profile of corporate arrogance. *CiteULike*. Retrieved from <http://www.citeulike.org/user/mluxion/author/Tokar:B>

Towers, P. (2013, June 19). Buzz off, Monsanto. *PRWatch*. Retrieved from <http://www.prwatch.org/news/2013/06/12152/buzz-monsanto>

---

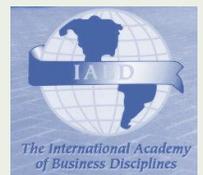
# QRBD

## QUARTERLY REVIEW OF BUSINESS DISCIPLINES

---

November 2015

Volume 2  
Number 3



A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF BUSINESS DISCIPLINES  
SPONSORED BY UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA  
ISSN 2334-0169 (print)  
ISSN 2329-5163 (online)