

48 A Good Thing Ethical Review

Ethical Communications is all about the pursuits of truth. Public relations practitioners have many different ways of changing the viewpoints of celebrities in the media. With any breaking news, a celebrity can go from being one of the most beloved to being one of the most hated. The practitioners goal is to prevent their celebrity clients from becoming one of the most hated and notorious. The usage of media can be a helpful tool to promote these celebrities in a positive way so their career does not become impacted by the events around them. Some of the main techniques found to be the most useful is to be able to get a hold of the situation with the media and control the narrative. In the case of Martha Stewart, she was charged with securities fraud, obstruction of justice, conspiracy, and making false statements.

At the time of her arrest, she lost much of her persona with the media. Many reports were ambushing her and trying to ruin her reputation. She was bashed for being an overly greedy person who used their popularity to gain an advantage in life. Many people following this story were stunned by her arrest and wanted answers. Fortunately enough Ms. Stewart has not caused any trouble before that moment, so many of her supporters were still around supporting her through her toughest time. Martha Stewart's public relations practitioners noticed the large number of supporters she still had and tried to take control of her situation back from the media. They created a website in which supporters could email her notes of support through the website. She received over 60,000 emails in which gave her moral support and also testify on Ms. Stewart's character. Her lawyers used these emails in efforts to, "reinforce the sympathies of her

followers.” (225). They wanted to show many people still believe Martha Stewart was innocent and has been falsely accused of insider trading. They knew the emails were not going to persuade the jurors in any way, but her lawyers were hopeful others would not look down upon her.

The main thing we are analyzing in this excerpt is her personal website which was taken down shortly after her case concluded. The public relations practitioners wanted to be able to control every aspect of her media representations. They would post whatever positive emails they wanted to, and bury anything they received which was negative. “On the website, all the posted messages were positive and supporting which may not be surprising, considering who controls the site.” (225). It was imperative for them to be able to wash away any dirt that was on Ms. Stewart. According to the book, it suggests reporters should approach this case by, “disregard[ing] social position and gender and treat all litigants fairly” (225). As much as I believe this should be the case, this is not something that could be realistic. The judicial system is designed for people with high social status like her. The system was designed for her to get little to no punishment for her crimes. She knew it, her lawyers knew it, and everyone else knew it too. Because of this, as a reporter your approach would have to change. The reporters cannot go into every case the same exact way. Each case contains its own circumstances so reporters would need to adjust the same way. In this case, Martha Stewart was getting special treatment and the reporters should recognize this is the case and adapt to these special circumstances. While Martha Stewart’s case was still going on, she continued to put herself out there in the limelight and claim her innocence.

Overall, Martha Stewart relied on her loyal fans to keep her innocence alive. Her public relations practitioners took advantage of her loyal supporters by using their emails to sway the

rest of the world that she is innocent of all crimes and there are several thousand others who believe she is innocent. However, Ms. Stewart decided to step down as CEO so that her company is not affected by these crimes. So, she ended up taking a position as CCO, another high ranking position but not liable for the company. This move was also to protect her million dollar company from any violations with the SEC, or the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commissions. I do not believe what Martha Stewart's public relations practitioners did was unethical at all because they only did what they had to do in order to save Martha Stewart's public image. Overall, I believe Martha Stewart's team did the best they could and excelled in making her still seem very likable.