

## Transparency and Trust: The Key to Open Communication at PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur

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### Abstract

This research focuses on the implementation of PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur when it builds strong relationships with its public through open communication. Public trust and transparency are crucial in overcoming the consequences of the explosion at Factory 5 of PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur. These attract media attention because of their significant impact on its factory operations. The research method used in this study is a qualitative case study. It collected data through three stages: observation, interviews, and literature study. In this research, the data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion or verification stages are the three steps to assist the authors in the data analysis. The research results show that PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur has applied principles of Excellence Public Relations Theory by prioritizing transparency, trust, and open communication to maintain its reputation and relationships with the public. It responded quickly, provided a transparent written response regarding the incident, and actively monitored the dynamics of public opinion. PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur's steps include stakeholder involvement, collaboration in designing PR programs, and effective online reputation management. Evaluation of these steps shows its awareness of the importance of continuous learning and adaptation to maintain its reputation and image. Therefore, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur's transparent, open communication approach reflects its commitment to achieving PR principles effectively in facing the challenges they are encountering.

**Keywords:** Open Communication, Transparency, Trust, Strong Leadership, Public Opinion

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### Introduction

News about the explosion at Factory 5 of PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur has attracted media attention. This incident occurred on Saturday, July 23, 2022, at 12.00 WITA in Bontang, East Kalimantan. Excessive combustion caused the explosion, which resulted in severe damage and heavy impacts on its factory operations. This news created a wave of widespread attention, highlighting the significant impact on the news. The news media underlines the public's reaction and the responses of the company, governments, and other related agencies. This incident raises technical

challenges in industrial management and highlights the importance of transparency and open communication.

It has raised transparency as a beneficial, ethical principle in public relations and business literature (Holland et al., 2018). In handling problems like this, the role of public relations is crucial. With the development of information and communication technology 4.0, news can spread quickly. As a facilitator, public relations (PR) aims to connect any information from the community the company needs and vice versa (Yayu et al., 2019). Therefore, the role of public relations is essential in maintaining this transparency.

Public relations acts as a liaison between the company and the public. It ensures that the company conveys information efficiently and effectively. Apart from efficiency and effectiveness, another impact of transparency understood in the literature generally is trust (Albu & Flyverbom, 2019). The most well-known model, originating from the works of engineer Claude Shannon in the late 1940s, seeks to enable the evaluation of communications technology's ability to transmit information efficiently and effectively (Fenster, 2015).

Transparency explains rules, plans, processes, and implementation so everyone understands why, how, what and how much. Transparency ensures that public officials, civil servants, managers, council members, and entrepreneurs can report their activities to the public so that stakeholders can be accountable (Muis, 2020). Involving the community and stakeholders in decision-making builds trust through transparency because actions and decisions can be liable to the public, encourage accountability, and create an environment where active community participation and constructive responses can improve existing policies and practices.

On the [bontangpost.id](https://bontangpost.id) page, PT Pupuk Kaltim's SVP Corporate Secretary Teguh Ismartono stated that there were no victims in this incident. The cause of the overfiring remains under investigation by the PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur technical team, which will re-evaluate and repair the damage and reactivate the plant. PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur confirms that it implements the Occupational Safety and Health procedures well, according to the highest standards and government regulations. Employees are empowered to stop work if it is potentially unsafe.

Based on the explanation above, crisis management, internal communication, and transparency are crucial in building trust and maintaining a company's reputation in crises. Strategic internal communication, including two-way symmetrical and transparent communication, has been proven to be a positive and robust factor in

influencing employees' communication behavior in crises (Kim, 2018). With symmetrical and transparent organizational communication, companies build trust and reduce insecurity in crises.

Previous research, titled "Effectiveness of Feed Content on Instagram Account @pupukkaltim\_id in Delivering Corporate Messages," evaluated the role of open communication through social media in building strong relationships with the public. The results of the study showed that effective communication through Instagram is an important part of a company's communication strategy (Putri & Rohmah, 2024). In addition, research on public trust entitled "Social License as a Corporate Sustainability Strategy of PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur" indicated that public trust in the company is closely related to the success of CSR programs and good interaction with the community (Soesilo & Rudito, 2022). Then research related to environmental issues entitled "Evaluation of Hazardous and Toxic Waste Management at PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur" showed that B3 waste management by PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur has been implemented effectively and according to applicable regulations and standard operating procedures. This study confirms that good waste management is an integral part of transparency and trust, which are key to PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur's open communication (Nugroho & Wilujeng, 2023). The relationship between these studies shows that transparency and open communication are important foundations for building trust and strong relationships between PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur, the public, and various stakeholders.

Based on the explanation above, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur consistently applies the principles of the Theory of Excellence in Public Relations through various communication and transparency initiatives. The company utilizes social media to build open and effective two-way communication with the public, which is to the theory that emphasizes the importance of clear and responsive communication channels. Public trust is built through the

success of CSR programs and constructive interactions with the community, by the theory that emphasizes the need for active involvement to gain social legitimacy. Then the company complies with regulations and operational standards in the management of B3 waste, which strengthens transparency and accountability as the keys to building public trust. Overall, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur has effectively applied the principles of the Theory of Excellence in Public Relations, making it the main foundation for building strong and mutually beneficial relationships with the public and various stakeholders.

When the incident occurred, many national and local media covered the case. On the online national media, CNN Indonesia displayed the title Pupuk Kaltim's Factory Explodes: Overfiring, Toxic Gas Denied. Meanwhile, Tempo's title mentioned the Viral Video of Pupuk Kaltim's Factory Exploding: Residents' Fear of Poison Smoke. Kompas reported the incident on July 24, 2022: Banned From Entering Factory 5 Explosion Area, No Investigation Right Now. In the local media, Kliksamarinda.com published Kaltim V PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur Factory Work Accident: Residents Panic For Explosions and Smoke. The title on Mediakaltim.com mentions Official Statement Prepared for Videos on the Explosion in 5 PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur, Kaltim Factory.

Public relations professionals have to pay attention to the media reporting this case. They need to understand the ethical impact of media transparency, and transparency can foster trust (Tsetsura & Aziz, 2018). Transparency builds public and organizational trust. Transparent communication is vital with the media and internally builds tight relationships and reduces conflict and doubt. Therefore, transparency can increase companies' relationships with stakeholders and mitigate conflict risks.

The online reporting about the factory explosion in PT Pupuk Kaltim highlights transparency in organizational communications, especially in crises. The company's public relations response

effectively served the media and built media relations. Organizational transparency emphasizes information sharing and message quality in public processing. Perceptions of transparency at the individual level are also essential in this context (Holland et al., 2018). Good media relations in PT Pupuk Kaltim PR can ensure that the information conveyed to the media and the public is clear, accurate, and transparent because clarity, disclosure, and accuracy in organizational messages are crucial in determining transparency level (Holland et al., 2018).

After carrying out open and transparent communication, companies can build trust and reduce resistance to change (Pranawukir et al., 2023). Companies that communicate openly and transparently create an atmosphere where the public feels heard, their information is understood, and they build trust. It generates positive engagement and reduces resistance to change. Public Relations of PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur uses effective media relations and open, transparent, and honest communication to the factory explosions, build trust, and reduce resistance. It follows the principles of PR Excellence Theory, where effective and transparent communication is the foundation of good stakeholder relations, and uses the four-step PR model. These four steps can serve as a guide for developing an effective plan. Although there are some variations in the name of the process, the steps are essentially the same (Marquis, 2018).

This study aims to find out how the implementation of transparency and open communication by PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur affects public trust and builds strong relationships with the public. Open communication is expected to be the main foundation for rebuilding public trust.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for excellent public relations (PR) is based on Excellence Theory, which emphasizes strategic communication and relationship management. This framework is complemented by a four-step public

relations model that guides practitioners' strategic efforts, as follows:

**Excellence Theory:** Developed by Grunig et al., this theory states that effective PR fosters mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their public (Nicoli & Komodromos, 2015).

**Strategic Modes:** Andersson identified four strategic modes in PR: absorbed, deliberate, deliberative, and abstract, which reflect different approaches to strategy formation and execution (Andersson, 2024).

**Four-Step Public Relations Model:** (1) Research: Understand the audience and context; (2) Action: Develop a strategic plan based on research findings; (3) Communication: Execute the plan through targeted messages; (4) Evaluation: Assess the effectiveness of communication efforts (Nicoli & Komodromos, 2015).

While Excellence Theory and the four-step model provide a strong framework for PR, some scholars argue that the field must continue to evolve by integrating diverse theoretical perspectives to address contemporary challenges (Valentini & Edwards, 2019)

## **Material and Methodology**

This research adopts a qualitative approach to understand and explain in-depth about the social phenomena. This approach involves the interpretation of the context, experiences, and viewpoints of individuals involved in the observed phenomenon directly (Ardiansyah et al., 2023).

Research is a device for human beings to explore various problems and phenomena in life. The diversity of interests and research fields is reflected in the breadth of scientific disciplines possessed by human beings, giving rise to a mixture of research methodologies (Sa'adah et al., 2022). In qualitative research, understanding relevant theories is crucial for analyzing research results. However, testing previous theories is not the main focus of qualitative research; however, it is about ensuring that the researcher's findings have validity, which may involve considering pre-existing theories (Yusanto, 2020).

The type of research used is a case study. Researchers use this method to deeply understand issues, events, or phenomena that occur in real-life contexts (Nurahma & Hendriani, 2021). The case study method used in research shows a desire to thoroughly understand the context of the studied case and its details. It allows researchers to gain deep insight into the phenomena observed in real-life environments.

Case study research focuses on the investigated case being the main aim and center of research attention (Assyakurrohim et al., 2022). This approach is acceptable for complex phenomena because other research methods cannot explain them. In addition, case study research can contribute to problem-solving and theory development in various fields because it provides an in-depth understanding of specific cases. This qualitative research explores the actions of public relations in handling the explosion case at Factory 5 of PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur, aiming to strengthen public relations with the public through open and trusted communication.

The data collection used in this research involved several methods, namely observation, interviews, and literature study. The authors carried out observations from various news published in online media, national and local, within a certain period, namely from July 23, 2022, to September 22, 2022. Next, we interviewed the Corporate Communications Division of PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur.

Finally, we used literature studies to support the analysis and provide the results of this research. With a combination of these methods, this research can explore information from various sources and points of view and provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the phenomenon under study. In this research, the data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion or verification stages are the three steps used to assist researchers in data analysis.

In this study, the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion or verification are three steps used to assist

researchers in conducting data analysis. Data reduction obtained from news observations in online media, interviews with the Corporate Communications Division of PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur, and relevant literature are selected and summarized to focus on key aspects relevant to the study.

The second step in data presentation Data obtained from news observations is presented in the form of news summaries and observed trends; interview data are organized in thematic or categorical forms that reflect the views and information obtained from the Corporate Communications Division; and literature studies are presented by highlighting theories and literature that support the analysis.

The last step of verification This step involves interpreting the results of observations, interviews, and literature studies to identify patterns, relationships, and key findings. Verification is carried out to ensure that the conclusions drawn are consistent with the data obtained and relevant to the objectives of the study. Researchers also compare the findings with existing theories and literature to ensure the validity of the results.

## **Result and Discussion**

This research goal aims to analyze PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur's implementation when the company builds strong relationships with its public through open and transparent communication to achieve trust, especially regarding the consequences of the explosion at Factory 5. In this context, various national and local online media play a crucial role in conveying information about the accident to the public. PR excellence theory, or the theory of excellence in public relations, emphasizes the importance of transparency, trust, and open communication in maintaining reputation and relationships with the public. In this case, research links open communication practices to the company's efforts to improve its public image after the explosion at its factory.

The Excellence Theory in PR, as explained by Grunig (2008), shows that

strong relationships between organizations and stakeholders are the key to achieving excellence in communication and reputation (Septiyani, et al., 2024). It is relevant to PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur's efforts to build strong relationships with its public through open, transparent communication, especially in dealing with the consequences of the explosion at Factory 5, reported in the media widely. The principles of the Excellence Theory emphasize that the measurement of effective public relations comes from its ability to improve the organization's economic performance and social responsibility (Davidson, 2016). In this context, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur strives to maintain balanced two-way communication to identify and overcome external factors influencing its goal achievement.

Furthermore, the symmetrical two-way model in Excellent PR highlights the importance of balanced and mutually beneficial communication between an organization and its public. It underscores the importance of PR's role as an integral part of the organization. It focuses on ethics, integration with other forms of communication, and ongoing research of the public to ensure adaptation of messages to suit needs. Careful strategy and planning, robust internal relationships, and pressure handling from activist groups are crucial factors in building successful relationships with the public (Nicoli & Komodromos, 2015). In this context, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur can adopt this approach to improve public relations with its public and the company's image after the explosion incident at its factory.

By adopting a symmetrical two-way model in excellent PR for handling explosive cases, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur's public relations implements a communication strategy with its public. According to Rottger et al. (2014), usually, the traditional conceptual framework for strategic communications as a whole, as well as public relations in particular, consists of four main stages in addressing problems: situation analysis, strategy, implementation,

and evaluation, although the models differ in specifics (Wiencierz & Röttger, 2019).

Other communication strategies of model planning processes consist of ROPE (Research, Objectives, Programming, and Evaluation) by Jerry Hendrix or RACE (Research, Action Planning, Communication, and Evaluation) by John Maston (van Ruler, 2015). Meanwhile, according to Cutlip, Center, and Broom in Yulianita (2007), four stages need to go through effective planning: defining public relations problems (situation analysis), planning and programming, taking action and communicating, and evaluating the program (Silviani, 2020). By understanding and following the stages that this study has explained, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur designs and evaluates its PR programs more efficiently and effectively in handling the explosion case, as follows:

*Situation Analysis.* This stage requires a balance between the advantages and disadvantages of the program before deciding on the best course of action (Widianto et al., 2024). As the explosion occurred, many national and local online media reported the incident at Factory 5 of PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur. It also gained public attention due to amateur videos circulating on social media in which the narrative contained the words poison and explosion.

The recorded videos show a cloud of white and orange smoke rising from the explosion site. The PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur immediately took steps in the afternoon of July 23, 2022. It sent a written response via Teguh Ismantono as Secretary to the Vice President to the media. In his statement, Teguh revealed that Factory 5 PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur was temporarily closed due to a malfunction in one of the equipment. When trying to restart the production process, over-firing occurs. He added that there was no need to worry about poisonous gas being released into the air, as spread in circulating rumors widely.

The PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur's immediate action of providing a written response is a concrete effort according to the principles of monitoring information,

opinions, community attitudes, and behavior in public relations practices. In this case, the CCP actively monitored national and local online media reports and public reactions to the incident. From this monitoring, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur understands the importance of providing fast and appropriate responses when situations develop. Thus, the PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur's steps reflect an awareness when it continues to monitor and respond to the dynamics of public opinion in maintaining the company's reputation and image.

It is the statement submitted by the Corporate Division:

"In a factory, an explosion occurs, equipment malfunctions or a fatality can prevent work accidents; these are also things we need to handle seriously, especially in the media. Maybe you heard that last year, a factory exploded. At that time, photos circulated, but these photos entered the media without a clear narrative. It gave rise to many perceptions in the public that this gas was poisonous and dangerous when polluting the air. After that, we quickly followed up by issuing an official statement from the company to the media. The statement confirmed that the current conditions were under control and there were no casualties."

Based on the previous explanation, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur's quick and open response to the explosion at Factory 5 reflects the principles of transparency and trust in public relations practices. The CCP monitored media reports and public responses. It also provided timely clarification about the causes of the explosion and safety conditions. It shows the company's awareness of the importance of responding to public opinion and building a robust foundation of relationships through open communication to maintain its reputation and image.

The advantages of the CCP's response were its rapid response and effective control of the narrative through written responses to the media on the same day. PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur also shows awareness of

the importance of monitoring the media and public reactions to respond appropriately to the dynamics of public opinion, supporting the maintenance of the company's reputation.

However, there are several drawbacks. First, responses may lack technical details about the cause of the explosion and future countermeasures. More detailed information about repairs and preventive actions can increase transparency. Second, a lack of empathetic expression in responses can reduce communication effectiveness. Even when explaining public safety, a lack of empathy can make responses feel too formal or irrelevant to the public. This deficiency can be the focus of improvement in the future.

*Planning and Programming.* The next stage is completing the planning and programming stages, creating strategic programs and technical and non-technical concepts, and coordinating tasks and responsibilities (Hani, 2021). Planning must follow current regulations and take into account events occurring both inside and outside the organization (Setiawan, et al., 2024).

The rapid and open response from PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur to the explosion incident at Factory 5 reflects the company's commitment to transparency and trust principles in PR practices. This first step is the planning and programming results that Public Relations of PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur carried out, which formulates programs, goals, actions, and communication strategies by holding internal meetings before the statement is released. The statement made by the Corporate Division is as follows:

"So the first statement we have to issue is how we calm the local community first so that the issues circulating in society do not consume them."

This explanation relates to deficiencies in the first stage because it needs further investigation regarding the explosion incident, which the company will inform

them of in the stages as a form of empathy for the community's concerns.

The second step of the CCP's PR process involves integrating findings from media monitoring and public reactions into CCP policies and programs. It aims to address specific image problems. Involving clients or stakeholders in preparing public relations and collaboration programs strengthens the program's effectiveness. It ensures that PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur's PR objectives reflect the needs and expectations of various related parties and increase relationships with stakeholders through open communication.

It is a key to maintaining the company's reputation and image. It is from the statement made by the Corporate Division:

"Of course, to give confidence to the public, we must include the statements of key opinion leaders whom they can hold, for example, the mayor, police chief, and all parties who have authority in handling the case."

The use of key opinion leaders is part of the relationship between the company and its stakeholders because the public also wants to get answers from parties outside the company that are neutral.

PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur uses chief opinion leaders and monitors media in the company's communication strategy, especially in the current digital era. By online monitoring news, companies can be more responsive to developing issues, including the potential emergence of unfavorable content or misinformation about the company. Media monitoring can also provide valuable insight into public perceptions and attitudes towards a company, thereby assisting in strategic decision-making and adjustments in corporate communications.

Therefore, online media monitoring becomes an inherent element of the company's efforts to build and maintain strong relationships with the public and stakeholders. It is from the Corporate Division's statement,

"Well, the next task for the media is how we will always monitor news on the Internet."

Based on the explanation above, the planning and programming process for PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur's rapid and open response to the explosion incident at Factory 5 consisted of several integrated stages. The first stage involves internal meetings. It will formulate programs, goals, actions, and communication strategies. This step reflects the company's commitment to transparency and trust principles in PR practices. However, there were shortcomings in the first phase due to a lack of technical information about the causes of the explosion, which could reduce the effectiveness of the response.

The second stage involves integrating findings from media monitoring and public reactions into CCP policies and programs. Through collaboration with stakeholders, including key opinion leaders, the company strengthens the effectiveness of its PR program, ensuring that its responses reflect the needs and expectations of the various parties involved. In addition, the CCP also incorporates internet media monitoring into its communications strategy, enabling quicker responses to emerging issues and providing insight into public perceptions.

In this way, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur successfully strengthens relations with the public and stakeholders through the principles emphasized by the Corporate Division. These stages include planning, programming, collaboration, and media monitoring, an integral part of the company's efforts to maintain the company's reputation and image.

*Actions and Communication.* The third step is implementing a program of actions and messages aimed at achieving specific goals for each community to achieve the program's goals (Sari & Putriana, 2024). Pupuk Kalimantan Timur has done a series of responsive actions amidst the circulation of negative news regarding the explosion incident. Apart from providing initial statements to respond to issues that do not

correspond to actual events, the company also takes other action and communication steps.

Realizing that news about the incident would dominate initial search results in the media, the CCP immediately attempted to reduce the unfavorable impact that emerged. In this matter, it took proactive steps to manage the negative news. As stated by the Corporate Division,

"Because, for example, if we search for fertilizer Kaltim and select feature news at the beginning, all the explosive news will come out. So, our task after we can suppress is to eradicate the news from the circulating news."

This approach reflects a proactive PR strategy. The CCP seeks to suppress negative news and attempts to remove it from circulation or at least reduce its impact. When controlling the narrative that develops in society, the company can minimize the impact on its image. This strategy emphasizes the importance of effective online reputation management in facing the challenges of today's digital era. In addition, PR practitioners have recognized the importance of transparency when communicating with journalists. This transparency can change a closed culture into an open one in the public relations functions (Ashari & Arsyad, 2023) (Budhirianto & Sunarsi, 2017).

In this case, the PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur responds if the media or journalists ask questions directly to the company representatives. The responses are from the press release as the results of an internal meeting.

To reduce negative news, the PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur also involved chief opinion leaders, such as Bontang Police Chief, AKBP Yusep Dwi Prastiya, who submitted laboratory test results from the Forensic Laboratory Center (Puslabfor), East Kalimantan, Bontang Environmental Services, and East Kalimantan Regional Police Public Relations. These chief opinion leaders delivered statements via various media as the

results of handling the explosion incident with Pupuk Kaltim. This step is part of the company's communication strategy to overcome negative news and strengthen relations with the community.

*Evaluation.* The evaluation stage aims to improve public relations performance aside from upholding the quality of the PR team's output (Nurjuman & Priana, 2023). The process of evaluating a particular object involves the collection, analysis, and presentation of data regarding its effectiveness about previously established standards or goals.

The findings can then be taken into account when deciding "whether the program should be improved, terminated, or continued" (Divayana, 2018). PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur's evaluation of handling the explosion incident at Factory 5 reflects the company's success in suppressing negative news and managing the company's image by providing updates on handling developments, investigations regarding causes and impacts, and the investigation results to the public through key opinion leaders.

First, in the situation analysis, the CCP responded quickly to media reports and public reactions by providing transparent and timely written responses. This step reflects the company's awareness of the importance of monitoring and responding to the dynamics of public opinion that will maintain the company's reputation and image.

Second, in the planning and programming, the PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur shows its commitment to transparency and trust principles in PR practices. These steps result from internal meetings that formulate communication programs and strategies and integrate findings from media monitoring and public reactions into company policy. Collaboration with stakeholders also strengthens the effectiveness of PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur programs in overcoming specific image problems.

Third, in action and communication, the CCP adopts a proactive strategy when managing negative news. It controls the

narrative that develops in society. Through the involvement of chief opinion leaders and continuous delivery of information about handling developments and investigation results, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur successfully minimizes the negative impact on the company's image. These steps reflect the importance of effective online reputation management and transparency in communicating with the media and the public.

As a result, internet searches with news features show that the explosion incident is no longer in the top position, indicating the CCP's success in suppressing negative news about the incident. By continuing to provide updates on handling developments and investigation results to the public through key opinion leaders, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur has succeeded in maintaining the company's trust and reputation. Thus, this evaluation shows that PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur successfully faces PR challenges and maintains the company's image through responsive, transparent, and proactive PR practices.

Based on the explanation presented here, the process described highlights the success of PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur in handling the explosion incident at Factory 5. In this handling, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur effectively implemented transparency, trust, and responsiveness principles in public relations practices. The company's steps include situation analysis, planning and programming, action and communication, and evaluation. It reflects the company's awareness and commitment to maintaining its reputation and image. Fast and open responses, the involvement of chief opinion leaders, collaboration with stakeholders, and active online media monitoring are all integral parts of a successful PR strategy.

As a result, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur succeeded in suppressing negative news, managing the company's image, and maintaining public trust. This analysis shows that PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur can face public relations challenges responsively, transparently, and proactively. It makes

them an excellent example of effective and efficient PR practices.

### *Implementing Transparency and Trust*

The presentation described here is the initiatives of PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur to build strong relationships with its public through open, transparent communication. It shows several important points:

(1) Implementing the principles of excellence theory in public relations: PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur adopts the principles in its public relations practices, underscoring transparency, trust, and open communication to maintain reputation and relationships with the public. In this context, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur successfully responds to transparent written statements regarding the explosion incident at Factory 5:

(2) Commitment to Open Communication and Transparency: PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur demonstrates a robust commitment to transparency and trust principles in PR practices. The steps include the supply of official statements and the involvement of key opinion leaders. These reflect the company's awareness of maintaining open communication with the public;

(3) Responsive to Public Opinion Dynamics: The CCP actively monitored media reports and public response to the incident. A fast and timely response shows the company's awareness of responding to the dynamics of public opinion so that it maintains its reputation and image;

(4) Stakeholder Involvement and Collaboration: PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur can strengthen relationships with the public. It collaborates with stakeholders in designing PR programs and chief opinion leaders when communicating with the public. It shows the company's awareness of tight relationships with diverse related parties to maintain its reputation;

(5) Effective Online Reputation Management: The CCP adopts proactive strategies to manage negative news and control the narrative in the public. Through monitoring the internet and involving key

opinion leaders, the company can reduce the negative impact on its image;

(6) Performance Evaluation and Improvement: PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur evaluates the steps when handling explosion incidents. Therefore, the company can improve its PR performance in the future. This evaluation reflects the company's awareness of continuous learning and adaptation to maintain the company's reputation and image.

Thus, the above explanation highlights PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur's overall success in handling the explosion incident at Plant 5. It carries out a transparent, open communication approach. The steps reflect its commitment to powerful PR principles and adaptive strategies against the challenges they face.

### **Conclusions**

The implementation of transparency and open communication by PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur has proven to be a key factor in building public trust and strengthening relationships with stakeholders, especially in dealing with crises such as the explosion incident at Factory 5. Through the application of the principles of excellence theory in public relations, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur managed to respond to the incident quickly and provide a clear and transparent response.

Steps such as issuing official statements and active media monitoring have helped the company control the narrative and reduce the spread of negative news, thereby strengthening public trust in their commitment to handling the crisis.

In addition, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur demonstrated a strong commitment to open communication and transparency through various strategies, including involving key opinion leaders and collaborating with stakeholders. This approach not only helps in managing the company's image but also ensures that the information conveyed to the public is accurate and reliable. Collaboration with authorities and the use of trusted sources in communications strengthen the company's

message and assure the public regarding the steps taken to handle the incident.

In the final evaluation, PT Pupuk Kalimantan Timur's success in reducing negative impacts and maintaining the company's reputation reflects the effectiveness of its PR strategy. Evaluations conducted after the crisis showed that proactive responses and transparency were not only effective in dealing with emergencies but also in building strong and trusting relationships with the public. By continuing to apply these principles, CCP can continue to improve its PR practices and ensure that it remains an example of successful and efficient crisis communications.

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