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PR-e-FACE: From the desk of Chief Editor

“Many CEOs assume high knowledge even in grey areas”



Vice-President of a mid-sized Corporate calls up a PR Agency and wants to hold a Press Conference on the ensuing Saturday night to announce their branch opening. The official informs that their Chairman would be free only on Saturday nights. He expects National media, including Televisions to cover this branch opening announcement.

In another instance, a CEO with forty years of corporate experience gets angry if the release is vetted by the PR Agency and insists his version is final.

When we discussed such numerous instances in the group, our Editorial board decided to focus on the theme “Corporate Misconceptions and Idiosyncrasies” during this issue.

With the advent of liberalization and globalization, Corporates are facing lot of competition both locally and at multinational level. It is a matter of great concern that many of the

Corporate CEOs do not understand the communication dynamics.

Very unfortunately, the Business Schools do not provide sufficient knowledge of PR and Communication sensibilities. Many Indian Corporate CEOs ‘assume’ themselves to be more competent and knowledgeable even in many unknown areas, including communication, beyond their competent field.

This leads to lot of misconceptions and idiosyncrasies while they deal with media and other communication related functions. Instead of assuming to possess more knowledge, in their grey areas, they should try to take the guidance of competent communication professionals, as they do with other professionals like lawyers, doctors, company secretaries and Chartered Accountants. Indian Business Schools should include proper curriculum to make the future managers to understand nuances of communication dynamics properly. .

K. Srinivasan

prpoint@gmail.com

PR-e-CISE – Inside this ezine

- An exclusive interview with Mr K Ramasubramanian, Mg. Director, Masscom PR, Coimbatore
- Expert views on by Mr R.Gopalakrishnan and Mr R.Ramamurthy
- Extracts from the wiki views
- Views from Senior and Junior professionals

PR-eXCLUSIVE

“Corporates should understand media dynamics ”



Listen to the full interview through *podcast* at
<http://www.primepointfoundation.org/presense0507.htm>



Mr K. Rama
subramanian,
Founder and
Managing
Director,
Masscom PR (I)
Pvt. Limited,
Coimbatore is
one of the senior
PR practitioners.

He has been handling clients of different segments from different parts of the country.

In an exclusive interview to *PR-e-Sense*, he lists out few 'Corporate Misconceptions' from his experience. Excerpts:

- Many of the CEOs and Corp Com personnel are not aware of the media dynamics, structure of media organisations and their functioning.
- Few of them also carry wrong perception that journalists could be bought over for few hundred rupees or other means of inducements.
- Many of them expect the press to cover their organisation's internal events that would have no news value or information in the public interest.
- Some CEOs try to check the professional competence of journalists by demanding their profile before setting /sitting for interviews.
- Many expect the PR person to "push" the press for carrying their stories prominently with pictures. A huge construction and engineering company's corp com person once

demanded that their CEO's interview should be carried by a leading English daily with picture in the front page. I declined to handle that assignment. He was also not interested in learning on the dynamics of media.

- Many of them are under the impression that PR can do hardcore selling of their products/services replacing advertisements.
- At times, many companies even demand that their contact numbers, website address and email ids need to be carried with the news /feature stories, which may not happen always.
- In the recent times, many Mumbai/Delhi based Corporates just send a release (that would invariably have no local relevance to our region) asking us to "somehow" get them carried in leading publications. This trend is on the rise nowadays.
- Few Corporates say that they heavily advertise in a particular newspaper and hence that paper should publish their news prominently as a reciprocal gesture.
- Most of the CEOs want to shield themselves from the communication loop of PR and media personnel for reasons best known to them. They think that they can wield some power only by being inaccessible to media. This often proves detrimental to them at the time of crisis.

Mr Ramasubramanian may be reached at coimbatore.ram@gmail.com

PR –e- STIGE – Expert views

Mr R Gopalakrishnan, Business Editor, The Hindu arjee@thehindu.co.in

“Corporates should understand media priorities”



Corporates and PR Agencies offer media opportunities like press conferences or exclusive interviews to all the media and expect all of them to respond positively. They

should understand that every television channel or newspaper cannot take advantage of such media opportunities offered. It all depends on the priority, focus and space available in the concerned media or publication. Media can respond only to some of the opportunities.

We cannot respond to the business plans or financial results of closely held or private limited companies, the same way, we respond to the financial results of listed companies.

Some Corporates focus on the release of products in the name of press release and corporate functions. This will not work really. This type of practices should be avoided.

PR Agencies and Corporate communicators, when they work as intermediary between the Corporates and the Media, should understand the needs of each other better.

I suspect, some times, few Corporates and Media Agencies plan media events or press releases to counter the impact of media events or press releases planned by their competitors. This type of practices will not help anybody.

Some of the Corporates insist on publication of Awards or rankings. This depends on the media's assessment of the importance and credibility of the organisations who give the award.

Mr R Ramamurthy, Industrialist, Member of CII and FICCI gemini@eth.net

“Corporates should take suggestions of competent professionals”



Corporates take decisions at Managing Director level, particularly in the new subjects, like media relations, press conferences, press releases, etc. Now Corporates have to face new situations, which were not there

earlier. Corporates may not be aware of nuances of particular domain. In view of this, some of the Corporates may insist on their own knowledge and

exposure of the subject to be implemented.

For example, they may insist on a press conference to be arranged in the same evening, just because they are available on that day. They may not be aware, that arranging a press conference involves lot of procedures and preparations.

My request to the Corporates, who may not be having full exposure on the subject, is to take the advice of the competent professionals and act according to their suggestions.

Podcast: You can listen to the audio of Mr Gopalakrishnan and Mr Ramamurthy in the podcast at <http://www.primepointfoundation.org/presense0507.htm>

PR –e- Views – From the Wiki



We had requested the members of 'Image Management' and 'prpoint' groups to share some of the misconceptions, based on their past experience.

We had provided an exclusive Wiki for this purpose to record the views in the link <http://editthis.info/wiki/corporate>

Excerpts from the Wiki

Mr T N Ashok

Corporates (CEO's.CFOs) believe that a press release about an announcement should be written in a fashion that will please its shareholders and not the news media which is expected to project.. The fact is, if a news release is presented in a news form it is picked up by newspapers and also better understood by shareholders.

Corporates believe that meeting the media frequently is a dangerous practice . The fact is that if you meet them regularly you are seen as transparent and willing to share information. You buy goodwill and avoid a hostile press. Corporates feel that avoiding the media during a crisis is the best option. The fact is it is the worst thing to do. You end up creating suspicion in the minds of the media and open up unnecessary media

speculation that could be damaging to the company.



Corporates feel that they can present their viewpoints better to the world through the media, only through five star lunches, dinners and expensive gifts. The fact is that it proves counter productive with the serious minded journalists -- if you have nothing big to say don't meet the press; if you have something to say even a cup of tea would do; you can be on the front page depending upon the news you make.

Anonymous



Recently, there was a launch of a brand new Car held in Chennai. The venue for the launch was fixed near the airport, that too in the evening so that the CEO would find easy to reach the place to address the media.

Journalists in turn were provided pick up and drop to the venue. The event witnessed delay in the start of the conference and end result was less as expected. It was late realisation but the agency was helpless.

A small discussion with the agency would have averted loss of extra mileage out of the launch.

PR –e- Views – From the Wiki

Mr Tushar

Some senior management officials of many companies (read CEOs) have more than 200 numbers of journalists on their cell phone and they pick up any incoming call from them in order to give them opinion or views on the company, competition, policy and so on.. They are always available to media.



One such CEO had the similar ability and he boasted about his PR skills to the agency. One day Mr. CEO told a very friendly journalist that he went and met Chairman of the rival company 'X' for the position of CEO. Next day - it was a Headline "X on expansion, plans to poach CEO from Y"

and with a confirmation from MR. CEO that he met the big boss of other company.

Our dear friend had a tough time retaining his job and the other party did not hire him - stating that we have no poaching agreement with that company and we don't hire people from there. Mr. CEO is working with a third company now and he doesn't have any journalists' numbers in his cell phone. However, as PR professional my advice is never do it Having a media friendly CEO is a boon to PR guys but he or she should understand where to draw the line and behave with responsibility and care.

Golden rule is: be always accessible but not always available.

Mr Gerry McCusker gerry@prdisasters.com

'Them' and 'Us' mentality - Some corporations (and unfortunately PR personnel) view a lot of their stakeholder relationships as essentially one way and adversarial, rather than two way and mutually beneficial partnerships.

A leading US fashion retailer, for example, received substantial negative feedback from the media and key stakeholders because of marketing sexually inappropriate material to children. In responding to the criticism, it went on the attack saying that any 'inappropriateness' existed solely in the dirty minds of those making the allegations. This defensively entrenched position only served to fuel the fires of additional (critical) media coverage and stir up



the participation of other activist groups.

Lesson to learn: Today's internet-linked communications environment no longer needs to be about the one way push of information; it's an ongoing dialogue. So forget 'them and us'; PRs, clients, stakeholders, media and activists are all dining at the same table. As with having friends over to dine, be polite, be cordial to ensure your hospitality is reciprocated.

PR –e- Views – From the Wiki

Mr Arun Arora

It is tempting on part of the media and CEO to interact occasionally. PR professionals in such cases just become mute witness. One way to avoid such happening is to learn and gather sufficient knowledge - to be able to value add to a journo's query -

be ready with info on the company, industry and perhaps trends in the sector. A journo needs information - we can build our credibility by being able to provide information - time and again.

Anonymous

Corporates and agencies are to understand that importance is to be given to news worthiness of an initiative rather than PR for PRs sake. Corporates are to understand that all their marketing initiatives cannot be leveraged through PR - but rather

initiatives which showcase the companies drive towards a cause makes news worthy and also from the media perspectives valuable reporting. Agencies are required to become more mature in putting their foot down if the initiative is not worth it.

Anonymous

All Management bodies like CII, FICCI and other Chambers conduct seminars and workshop on various issues. But they never show any concern on this

important issue. They should organise programmes to CEOs to sensitise them on various PR and communication challenges.

PR – e- Groups – Have you joined discussion groups?

Image Management Group – Second largest yahoo group on PR with nearly 1500 global members. Click here

http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/Image_Management/

PRpoint Group - The largest Indian group for PR/CorpComm /academic professionals with 700 plus members. Click here

<http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/prpoint/>

New Media Forum Group – A group for Indian journalists with around 350 members. Click here

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/New_Media_Forum/

India Vision Group – A group for Indian youth on India Vision 2020 with around 1200 members. Click here

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/India_Vision_2020/

Subscribe to this ezine PR-e-Sense – Click here

http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/PResense_ezine/join



A business executive was deep in debt and could see no way out. Creditors were closing in on him. Suppliers were demanding payment. He sat on the park bench, head in hands, wondering if anything could save his company from bankruptcy. Suddenly an old man appeared before him.

"I can see that something is troubling you," he said.

After listening to the executive's woes, the old man said, "I believe I can help you."

He asked the man his name, wrote out a check, and pushed it into his hand saying, "Take this money. Meet me here exactly one year from today, and you can pay me back at that time." Then he turned and disappeared as quickly as he had come.

The business executive saw in his hand a cheque for \$500,000, signed

by John D. Rockefeller, one of the richest men in the world!

"I can erase my money worries in an instant!" he realized. But instead, the executive decided to put the un-cashed cheque in his safe. Just knowing it was there might give him the strength to work out a way to save his business, he thought. With renewed optimism, he negotiated better deals and extended terms of payment. He closed several big sales. Within a few months, he was out of debt and making money once again.

Exactly one year later, he returned to the park with the un-cashed cheque. At the agreed-upon time, the old man appeared. But just as the executive was about to hand back the cheque and share his success story, a nurse came running up and grabbed the old man.

"I'm so glad I caught him!" she cried. "I hope he hasn't been bothering you."

He's always escaping from the rest home and telling people he's John D. Rockefeller." And she led the old man away by the arm.

The astonished executive just stood there, stunned. All year long he'd been wheeling and dealing, buying and selling, convinced he had half a million dollars behind him.

Suddenly, he realized that it wasn't the money, real or imagined, that had turned his life around. It was his new found self-confidence that gave him the power to achieve anything he went after.

Source: unknown

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Feedback and contributions to:
ezinepresense@gmail.com

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