

Published by Prime Point Foundation
(Supported by Public Relations Council of India and Chennai PR Club)

PR-e-FACE: From the desk of Chief Editor **“Blogs and podcasts are boons in the hands of Corporates”**



What started as a personal diary by few enthusiastic youngsters few years back, has emerged today as a powerful communication tool as 'Blogs'. With further improvement, blogs have advanced to 'audio podcasts' and 'video podcasts'. Many of the corporates in developing countries are yet to understand the potentiality of these tools.

At times, they are ignored as 'casual writings'. There are instances where even the big Institutions were put to embarrassment. Many times, these blogs are driving even the mainline print and visual media to pick up some stories, which otherwise were ignored by them earlier.

The first ever National 'Unconference' on blogs "BlogCamp 2006" held recently at Chennai, brought together many bloggers across the country and abroad. Presently, blogs are getting focussed on subjects. It is estimated that there are more than 100

million blogs across the world and is growing at a speed of one blog every half-a-second.

Corporates need to recognise the role of Blogs in the system. They can encourage their employees and public to blog about their products and services. They need to develop a level of 'tolerance' for the criticisms and convert them into opportunities of building brand.

There are instances where the Corporates instead of addressing the genuine criticisms properly, resort to 'dubious' methods to curb bloggers. In the long run, such approach may lead to disaster.

A time has come that Corporates instead of ignoring the 'blogs and podcasts', take advantage of them

In this issue, we will be bringing out some important aspects of how blogs can be used by corporates as their marketing and brand building tool, including the legal aspects.

K. Srinivasan

prpoint@gmail.com

PR-e-CISE – Inside this ezine

- An exclusive interview with Mr Amit Agarwal, India's No 1 professional Blogger
- An exclusive Interview with Mr Na. Vijayashankar (Naavi) on Cyber laws affecting the blogs
- An exclusive Interview with Mr Kiruba, the earliest and leading Blogger of India
- A report on BlogCamp 2006
- Cricket legend Gavaskar's views
- Views of experts
- Podcast and many more

PR-eXCLUSIVE – Blogs give human face to the Corporates



Listen to the full interview through *podcast* at
<http://www.primepointfoundation.org/presense0906.htm>

Mr Amit Agarwal (30), from Agra, is No 1 Blogger in India. His blog 'Digital Inspiration' <http://labnol.blogspot.com> attracts around 1.25 million visitors every month. He quit the lucrative job of a Fortune 500 company to become a 'professional blogger' earning more money.



In an exclusive conversation with Ms Veena Vinod of PR-e-Sense, Mr Amit shares his success story and also how Corporates can make use of blogs for their business. (Listen to the full interview through podcast- link given above) Excerpts:

Q: How Corporates can use blogs to promote their products?

A: Microsoft, Dell, even media like New York Times have blogs. The biggest advantage is that the blogs given human face to the company. It provides opportunity to the public to interact with the person, who has a voice in the company. Secondly, for promoting the products, it shunts the path of traditional press releases. It has a viral effect.

When Nokia introduced a new model, they requested bloggers to blog about it. The traffic was so much that they had to shut down their servers twice. They saved huge money on Advertisement.

Q: How to increase the traffic to the blogs?

A: People are interested in unique content. They are not interested to

read what they are aware. Even if they read what they are aware, they want to know your perspective.

Q: What do you feel about the future of blogs?

A: Blogs have come to stay. According to the CEO of Technorati, the leading search engine for blogs, they monitor more than 50 million blogs. New blog is born, every half a second.

Recently, when the Government of India banned blogs, even my grandfather showed interest in knowing about blogs, after reading newspapers.



Q: Can you cite some examples of corporate use of blogs?

A: Dell Company, through their blogs, show the video of their factory and products. Existing customers get the first hand information. Another US based software company has a Chief Technological Evangelist who will monitor all the blogs and even somebody flames the products, he takes up with the Management. This enables the company to talk to the people to give the correct information.

Q: Do you recommend any Blog Policy to the Corporates?

A: Though the employees are blogging, the contents are owned by you. You may consult your legal experts. I would suggest that you don't censor the bloggers. Don't make complicated procedures to pass the contents through various levels, like press releases.

PR-eSTIGE – Bloggers: beware and be aware of Cyber laws!



Listen to the full interview through *podcast* at
<http://www.primepointfoundation.org/presense0906.htm>



Mr Na. Vijaya Shankar (popularly known as Naavi) (52) is one of the leading Cyber Law Consultants in India. He is also the Founder of virtual Cyber Law College, He is the author of the first book on Cyber Law, way back in 1999. He is the Co-Founder of Cyber Society of India.

In an exclusive conversation with K. Srinivasan of *PR-e-Sense*, Mr Naavi speaks about the Cyber laws affecting the bloggers. (Listen to his entire interview in audio – link given above) Excerpts:

- Anything in electronic space will have the same legal validity as any of the written material (like books, newspapers, etc). It is applicable to blogs, discussion groups, websites, etc.
- Publishing in the electronic space is also like publishing a book or newspaper. Regulations relating to contents which are objectionable in the local laws are also applicable to contents in internet space. It depends on the law of the place where the publisher resides.
- Yahoo website published certain information, which was objected by French Government. Finally, it was resolved by removing the objectionable content from the French language site.
- 'Comments' placed in the blogs is part of the publishing, for which the blog owner is responsible.
- If any employee of an organisation, while blogging, reveals the trade

secrets of the company or post the intellectual property information in public domain, he would be committing an offence under relevant provisions.

- There is no 'absolute freedom of expression' anywhere. Bloggers cannot act outside the law of his country. Even in USA, Patriot Act has imposed certain restrictions.
- Bloggers should be cautious about the 'infringement' of Intellectual Property laws. Journalists using the contents for comments, anyone using for research purposes, personal use, educational purposes in class room, etc. would be considered as 'fair use' and would not be considered as 'infringement'. In other cases, the permission of the owner of the content either express or implied needs to be taken.
- Indian laws consider publishing, distribution and transmission of obscene materials as punishable upto 5 years of imprisonment. According to Indian Penal Code, promotion and advertising of obscene materials is also punishable. Blog owners should avoid even giving hyperlink to such obscene sites.
- Bloggers before posting the message, should analyse the contents to avoid violating (1) pornographic laws (2) copy right laws and (3) Trade Secrets Act.
- Prevent posting of anonymous comments in the blogs. The author of such contents should be identifiable, atleast the IP address.

His website www.cyberlawcollege.com
 Email id naavi@vsnl.com

PR-eSTIGE – Never, ever let your PR dept. handle the blog!



Listen to the full interview through *podcast* at
<http://www.primepointfoundation.org/presense0906.htm>

Mr Kirubashankar (Kiruba) (32) is a well known and an earliest blogger in India. He started his career as a journalist and presently he is working as Associate Director in Sulekha.



He has been mainly responsible for creating blog awareness in India and was behind the BlogCamp 2006 held recently at Chennai. His blog www.kiruba.com is quite popular amongst the bloggers globally.

In a conversation with K. Srinivasan of *PR-e-Sense*, he shared many views about the corporate blogs. (Listen to the entire interview in audio – link given above). Excerpts:

- No one has count about bloggers in India. Though various figures are floating around, my estimate is around 75 to 100 thousand blogs.
- Technorati claims to be monitoring around 50 million blogs. They don't count Chinese blogs, Myspace blogs. My estimate of global blogs is around 100 million.
- Blog is a great tool for Corporates. They can update the customers. It is a two way channel.
- Macromedia through various user groups got in touch with designing and developing community. They have many products. Each product manager started using blogs to get in touch with various users. In this, they

found lot of alpha testers, who came out with feedback. By this, they could develop best products. This developed stronger affiliation of the users with the product.

- Corporates can easily start the blogs. Start a section in your own website for blog. You have readymade softwares, which could be installed in less than a minute. Encourage your employees to blog. Keep as much less, rough and loosely held rules. Let the CEO also blog. Accept the mistakes. Tell the customers how you are correcting. That will enhance your image and credibility.
- Corporate Blog can also be 'two edged knife'. If you don't write properly, you may get negative image.
- Never ever let your PR department handle the blog. That is one of the biggest mistakes, many Corporates do. When PR department handles the blog, most of the conversations get corporatised.
- Let the CEO, Project Managers, Team Leaders and others blog. Encourage honest and frank talk.
- Many people blog in Google and Microsoft. I hear that they don't have many rules.
- *WordPress* is a good blogging tool in the 'open source'. There are many such tools. "It is not that camera that matters; It is the camera man who matters"

India Vision Group – The largest Indian youth group to discuss India Vision – around 1000 Indian youth as members – Meet many unsung heroes in the group.

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



Chennai witnessed on 9th and 10th September 2006 a huge congregation of 'bloggers' from across India at Tidel Park. The organisers called the event as 'Unconference'.

The quick meaning which the participants understood was 'order in disorder'. In the concept of 'unconference', the participants were the speakers and vice versa. Every one got his share of participation, unlike traditional 'conferences'.

A group of youngsters like Kiruba,



Sunil and many others started planning 100 days earlier, strategised and executed wonderfully to near perfection. The entire execution process was done through internet, right from the registration, selection of topics, etc. They created website www.blogcamp.in under wiki. Promotion of this event was done through blogs, which was later picked by mainline TV and print media.

Many leading bloggers across the country, including Mr Amit Agarwal (a



professional blogger) participated. The participants had an interaction session through video, with Mr Robert Scoble from USA (picture above), World's No 1 blogger (it was past midnight for him). World's Cricket legend Mr Sunil Gavaskar was a surprise visitor to share how he enjoyed podcast.

Another interesting feature was the entire programme was 'live web cast' and 'live blogged' by many participants. The entire auditorium was converted into Wi-Fi zone by Sify



and that could enable the bloggers to convey the proceedings to the entire world simultaneously.

The participants left the auditorium after two days of fun and discussions, looking forward to another one.



“I enjoy Podcasting. It is a fantastic tool” – Sunil Gavaskar, Cricket legend



I used to give commentary on Cricket matches live. You had a lot of time. For 'podcast' you need to sum up the entire play within 7 or 8 minutes. I need to prepare a lot. Really, I enjoy Podcasting. It is a fantastic tool.

I appeal to bloggers to talk more about games and sports other than cricket. That will help the growth of other games.

I am doing podcast through Yahoo! I belong to the 'transistor' age. Now the young cricketers are highly tech savvy.

I plan to start a 'blog' for cricket soon.

PR –e- VIEW – Expert views

Ms Krithika Shukla, Sr, Manger, Corporate Communication, Sify Limited
krithika_shukla@sifycorp.in

“Blogging is a wonderful communication tool”



Blogging is a wonderful communication tool. It is a space for Corporates to talk what they do and invite comments and informal interaction with customers for getting brand loyalty.

“Sunsilk Gang of Girls” blogs are excellent example of external communication. Anybody part of the blog have more 'recall', when they go

to departmental stores. The Company has used the blog to promote their products.

Blogs for the 'internal communication' enable employees interact with each other to develop a team spirit and employee morale. It enables interaction with the persons whom you may not know earlier.

Sify's "Fun Club" blog helps the employees to exchange lot of ideas and to know each other well.

Have you joined the PR discussion groups?

Image Management Group – Second largest yahoo group on PR with 1300 plus global members. Click here

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

PRpoint Group - The largest Indian group for PR/Corpcom /academic professionals with 600 plus members. Click here

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

PR –e- VIEW – Expert views

Ms Nidhi Dewan, Manager, Corp Communication, Webchutney
nidhi.dewan@webchutney.net

“Remember two important aspects before launching corporate blogs”

Blogs can help the Corporates to improve the corporate image. Before they launch blogging, they have to understand two things.

First, ‘content’ is the most important one. You should decide what you want to communicate and whether the customers would be interested to listen what you say. Happy customers may like to interact with you. This is possible, only when you have good products.

Secondly, you should be prepared to face ‘backlash’ due to comments and criticisms from customers and

employees. You should be able to manage the situation readily and answer back comprehensively.

Google has number of blogs. They are simple and efficient.

They tell the consumers about their products in



a friendly way. Another search engine Ask dot com, in their blog talks about development and how they innovate. They handle the consumers’ problem in a simple manner.

Michael Driehorst, Media Relations Manager, The Lauerer Markin Group Inc. Maumee, USA
miked918@yahoo.com Blog: <http://www.mikespoints.com>

“Blogs provide feedback and insight to the market”

From a business perspective, blogs and other social media allow companies to enhance relationships with customers while giving the company a “personality.”



With price so often a dominant factor in buying decisions, the more companies can connect with customers, the less price becomes a factor. Companies can connect by asking customers for comments on products, market issues and other topics. They can communicate their

views on industry trends and even news – rather through media relations and advertising vehicles.

People are already talking about companies with their friends, families and co-workers. By blogging and allowing comments, companies can participate in those conversations. While there will be negative comments, there will also be great feedback and insight to the marketplace.

Participating in those conversations will also give the company a personality, rather than being viewed as a cold, hard corporation.

This issue of PR-e-Sense is
 sponsored by Cyber Society of
 India

www.cysi.in



PR eTTY - Relax



A mechanic was removing a cylinder head from the motor of a Harley Davidson motorcycle,

when he spotted a well-known heart surgeon in his shop.

The surgeon was there waiting for the service manager to come and take a look at his bike when the mechanic shouted across the garage, "Hey Doc, can I ask you a question?"

The surgeon, a bit surprised, walked over to where the mechanic was working on the motorcycle.

The mechanic straightened up, wiped his hands on a rag and asked, "So Doc, look at this engine. I open its heart, take the valves out, repair any damage, and then put them back in, and when I finish, it works just like new. So how come I get such a small salary and you get the really big bucks, when you and I are doing basically the same work?"

The surgeon paused, smiled and leaned over, and whispered to the mechanic..."Try doing it with the engine running."

Moral: Evaluate a person based on the quality of skills at challenging times, and not based on peripherals.

(Source: unknown)

PResentors of PReSENSE

Chief Editor and Publisher:
K. Srinivasan (Prime Point)

Editor:
P A Narrendiran (Blue Lotus PR)
Associate Editor:
S. Sakthi Prasanna (Hanmer & Partners PR)

Editorial Board:
Veena Vinod (SGS Technologies)
Satish N (Anna University)

Podcast team
Uma Gopalakrishnan (O&M PR)
M M Selva Kumar (ePagemaker)

Editorial Advisors
M B Jayaram, (Chairman, National Council, PRCI)
T N Ashok (Alstom)
Arun Arora (GMR-DIAL)
Uma Bhushan (SIMSR)
R. Jai Krishna (Senior Journalist)

Feedback and contributions to:
ezinepresense@gmail.com

All the earlier issues may be downloaded from
www.primepointfoundation.org
