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PR-e-FACE: From the desk of Chief Editor **“ Urgent need for sensitising the Corporates on Media “**

With mushrooming of PR outfits and entry of many new freshers in the PR profession, the quality of the Corporate Press Releases are suffering heavily. A quick survey conducted by PR-e-Sense revealed a lot of alarming information on the Corporate Press Releases.



This may be due to lack of knowledge, or lack of drive to acquire knowledge. Though there, appears to be lot of pressure from the corporate top managements to draft the press releases according to their pleasure, PR and CorpComm professionals should not take shelter under that pretext.

PR and CorpComm professionals themselves should take the initiative in sensitizing the Corporate CEOs about the media sensibilities. This could be possible, only if the professionals themselves are knowledgeable, to command respect. PR / CorpComm

professionals, including the senior level officials need to update the knowledge and skills, in the fast changing environment.

Corporate top management officials should learn to refrain from interfering in the professional standards of media relations, by thrusting their views. They should also learn not to convert the Press Releases into an 'advertisement copy'.

The professional bodies like CII, FICCI, and AIMA have a greater role to play. They need to organise interaction sessions for CEOs with the media professionals and PR professionals. PRCI, PRSI and PRCAI should play a facilitating role. This would improve the credibility of the profession and also the Corporates.

K. Srinivasan

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PR-e-CISE – Inside this ezine

- An exclusive interview with Mr K T Jagannathan, a reputed financial journalist
- Expert views from Mr T N Ashok, formerly Economic Editor of PTI and presently a CorpComm consultant
- Report on 100th birthday of Press Release
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- Podcast and many more

PR-eXCLUSIVE – Improve credibility of press releases



Listen to the full interview through *podcast* at
<http://www.primepointfoundation.org/presense1006.htm>

Mr K T Jagannathan, one of the



reputed and senior financial journalists of India with more than 25 years of experience in various leading business

magazines of India speaks about the deficiencies in corporate press releases. In an exclusive podcast interview with K. Srinivasan for *PR-e-Sense*, he emphasizes the urgent need for improving the credibility of corporate press releases. Please listen to the full podcast interview (link given above). Excerpts from his interview:

- The corporate press releases, whether they are sent directly by the corporates or through the PR agencies, should be printed on the letter head of the company and signed by an authority. Presently, many press releases are received by the media. We need to identify the responsibility.
- Press Releases do not contain the contact numbers of the company officials. Even if available, company officials are not reachable. PR persons do not have additional information.
- Multiple press releases are sent. Unwanted information reaches the journalists. Press Releases need to be targeted. They should be related to the journalist and the media. Many press releases are discarded, for these reasons.
- Press releases may be sent through e-mail, followed by duly signed hard copy printed on the letter head. When the email is received, the journalist may work around that story.

- Corporates do not inform the media about the appointment of PR agency. Anybody can send a mail claiming to be a PR agency for the company. Signed hard copy in the letterhead will add credibility.

- PR agencies should convince the corporate clients about the various regional and national media requirements.

- Because of the mushrooming PR agencies and acute competition amongst the agencies, false promises are given to clients. Because of this, they want to push the messages whether they are good, bad or ugly.

- PR agencies should be facilitators. They should procure the information from their clients and furnish to media, whenever needed. Now they do only 'courier' role.

- MNC press releases are well packaged. If the journalists want to go beyond, it is very tough to get the information from them. They are always closed. They are not transparent to the extent what the journalists want.

- PR persons should earn respectability from journalists, clients and others. This can come only by improving knowledge.

- Corporate CEOs should be transparent with the media. They should not 'beat around the bush', which may lead to misinterpretation.

Mr K T Jagannathan can be reached at
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PR –e- STIGE – Expert views

Mr T N Ashok, Copcom Consultant, Alstom Group tn.ashok@power.alstom.com

“Balance the expectations of media and the corporates”



I have dealt with hundreds of companies during my tenure as Economics and Business Editor of a leading wire service.

As a media advisor, I have written press releases for corporates such as TATAs, Xerox, ALCATEL, and now ALSTOM. It can be a nerve wracking experience, assembling it from raw data given by business units and giving it a face to the press. It undergoes dramatic changes in the hierarchy of a corporate from the CEO to the COO to the CFO and to the Company Secretary to the Chairman of the company.

Each looks at the press release from his own perspective, and adds, deletes, rewrites, tones it down, tones it up as the need may be before it can go out. A press release can take anything between three days to fifteen days to be finalised depending upon its sensitive nature. No tall claims, No understatements, just factual presentation is what is actually needed.

While it may take a press release to be drafted over a week, it may take just seven seconds for a journalist to throw it into the waste paper basket. A corporate communicator has to necessarily balance the interests of various sections while drafting it. Most often journalists don't understand the deeper implications of a press release and why its worded in a particular manner.

Meanwhile as a person who has been

in journalism for 25 years and in corporate communications for six years, I would like to point out the issues involved in a press release and how each one looks at it :

Journalist's perspective

1) A journalist looks at a press release from the point of view

:

- a) News value
- b) Whether this has been highlighted
- c) If its a financial statement, then are all the figures there revenues, turnover, profits etc given?
- d) If its a product - are all the details about the product there and its utility value to the consumers and its pricing, affordable or not, does it offer value at that price to the consumer, etc.

Corporate perspective

2) A corporate or a corporate communicator (CEO, CFO COO) looks at a press release from a different perspective:

- a) Does the press release present the company in a good profile to the general public?
- b) to the stake holders (strength of the company)
- c) to the government (credibility of the company)
- d) to the competitors (competitive edge)
- e) to the general public (the value it offers to them)

The press release is not generally presented in terms of its news value to the journalists but more in terms of the projections it makes for the company in the market.

The corporate leaves it to the

journalists to pick it up in the manner his newspaper would like to present to its readers. A press release can be written from bottom to the top rungs of the hierarchy in a corporate atleast 25 times before its finally readied for release making sure there are:

- 1) no forward looking statements if its a listed company to prevent speculation in the markets
- 2) no vital information that could be publicised later is not prematurely publicised creating

problems of queries and follow-up stories that could interfere in a Corporates marketing strategies (telecom companies and automobile companies are most affected by this faux pas in a press release)

- 3) no discrepancies in figures in terms of profits, turnover, sales, dividends that cannot be reconciled
- 4) no discrepancy in statements in press release and when a company spokesperson speaks

PR –e- Learn – 100th birthday of Press Release



The press release turned 100-years-old over the weekend. As search marketers debate over the future of the online press release, we can learn some important lessons from the early history of public relations.

On October 28, 1906, at least 50 people lost their lives when a three-car train of the Pennsylvania Railroad's newly equipped electric service jumped a trestle at Atlantic City, NJ, and plunged into the Thoroughfare creek.

That afternoon, Ivy Lee, who some consider to be the father of modern

PR, created the first press release. The Pennsylvania Railroad was one of his clients. Following the accident, Lee not only convinced the railroad to distribute a public statement, he also convinced them to provide a special train to get reporters to the scene of the accident.

The New York Times was so impressed with this innovative approach to corporate communications that it printed the first press release—verbatim—on Oct. 30, 1906 as a "Statement from the Road." In the weeks that followed, both newspapers and public officials effusively praised Pennsylvania Railroad for its openness and honesty.

Source : <http://searchenginewatch.com/showPage.html?page=3623806>

PR –e VENTS – PRCI holds Health care PR Seminar at Hyderabad



The seminar on 'strategic Public relations in pharma and health industry' was organized by Public Relations council of India, Hyderabad chapter on 28th Sep 06. Inaugurating the Seminar, Union minister for State for health and family welfare Smt. Panabaka Lakshmi called upon the Public Relations practitioners

in the corporate sector to do their bit in improving the awareness of the government policies on health and family welfare. She also informed that Indian Government had allocated Rs.130 cr on IEC (Information, education and communication) towards awareness on family health care programmes. (Reported by Ms Rajeswari Iyer, Chairperson, PRCI, Hyderabad)

PR –e- Survey – Survey on quality of press releases

A quick on-line survey was conducted by Prime Point Foundation, as part of October 06 issue of Corporate e-zine *PR-e-Sense*.



The survey was to get the perspective of PR/CorpComm professionals and the journalists on the 'Corporate Press Releases' released to the media.

38 PR/CorpComm professionals and 23 Journalists responded to the survey and gave their views anonymously.

CONCLUSIONS

- Generally both PR/CorpComm professionals and Media persons have agreed that the quality of 'Corporate Press Releases' need to be improved. While PR/CorpComm persons have rated their own press releases at 51%, media persons have rated at 47%.
- Both PR/CorpComm professionals and media professionals agree with

the listed deficiencies, like lack of newsworthiness, usage of marketing and promotional information, etc.

- Interference from the Corporate Management, while drafting the press releases seems to be eminent, as more than 60 percent of the PR segment and CorpComm segment have uniformly felt the same. This may be because of the lack of understanding of the 'media functioning' by the Corporate Management Executives.
- Nearly 70 percent of the Media professionals are unable to get in touch with the concerned persons or to get the required information.
- More than 60 percent of the Press Releases get rejected or discarded for various reasons.
- More than 60 percent of the Media professionals prefer to get the press releases through email followed by fax or hard copy.

Download the full report from the following link
<http://www.primepointfoundation.org/survey1006.pdf>

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

Image Management Group – Second largest yahoo group on PR with 1360 plus global members. Click here
http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/Image_Management/

PRpoint Group - The largest Indian group for PR/CorpComm /academic professionals with 600 plus members. Click here
<http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/prpoint/>

PR –eEVENTS – National Conference at Hyderabad

Global Forum for Public Relations is organising two days National Conference at Hyderabad on 11th and 12th November 2006 with the theme "**Professionalism and ethics in Public**

Relations". For more details contact
gfpindia@gmail.com

or visit website
<http://www.gfpr.org/index.html>

PR –e- Learn – 12 points to remember



1. Use inverted pyramid style.
 2. Confine the 'lead' to 25 words, using 5W and 1H method (where, when, why, who, what and how)
 3. Provide proper caption, place and date
 4. Write in third party language
 5. Remember, your immediate audience is the 'News Editor'. He should get interested in the story.
 6. Avoid cliché, superlatives and advertorial materials, to please the boss or client.
 7. Use quotes of competent authorities, relevant to the story.
 8. Furnish contactable phone or mobile numbers of the persons, who can provide additional information.
 9. Print the release on the letter head of the company. Duly signed press release may be sent through email followed by hardcopy through fax or delivery.
 10. Provide duly translated press release to the regional language media,
 11. Simultaneously post the release in the company's website under 'media room'.
 12. Avoid sending bulky attachments to journalists, without their consent. Respect others bandwidth.
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PR –e- Learn – New buzz words: SEO PR and PR 2.0 for message releases

Search Engine Optimization Public Relations (SEO PR) is a blend of search engine visibility and traditional public relations that disperses a company's message across the Internet by way of online media outlets and search engines. SEO PR not only helps disseminate an organization's messages, but it also incorporates search engine-friendly communication through techniques such as optimizing copy in press releases, articles, white papers, blogs, RSS feeds, websites and more.

A successful search engine public relations engagement harnesses the power of the search engines by focusing on relevant keywords within the content being created and distributed. Careful attention has to be paid to the content created to ensure a

careful balance between search engine-friendliness and good copywriting. Ultimately people need to be able to easily read and understand the message without being bombarded by keyword spam (copy overloaded with keywords which affects readability and understanding).

PR 2.0: Another group of inventors are urging public relations agencies to post their news releases to social media websites. They're also lobbying press release distribution services to add del.icio.us bookmarks, Technorati tags, and Digg buttons to every news release.

They call their innovation "PR 2.0," "PR Squared," and "the social media press release."

For more details visit:

SEO PR <http://www.neboweb.com/eMarketing101/SEO-PR-Buzz-Worthy.aspx>

PR 2.0 <http://www.shiftcomm.com/downloads/pr2essentials.pdf>

PR –e- Learn – Social Media Press Release Template

Read : http://www.pr-squared.com/2006/05/the_social_media_press_release.html

Template: <http://www.shiftcomm.com/downloads/smprtemplate.pdf>



SOCIAL MEDIA PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE, VERSION 1.0

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Client contact
Phone #/skype
Email
IM address
Web site

Spokesperson
Phone #/skype
Email
IM address
Blog/relevant post

Agency contact
Phone #/skype
Email
IM address
Web site

NEWS RELEASE HEADLINE Subhead

CORE NEWS FACTS

- Bullet-points preferable



LINK & RSS FEED TO PURPOSE-BUILT DEL.ICIO.US PAGE
The purpose-built del.icio.us page offers hyperlinks (and PR annotation in "notes" fields) to relevant historical, trend, market, product & competitive content sources, providing context as-needed, and, on-going updates.



PHOTO
e.g., product
picture, exec
headshot, etc.

**MP3 FILE OR
PODCAST LINK**
e.g., sound bytes
by various
stakeholders

GRAPHIC
e.g., product
schematic;
market size
graphs; logos

VIDEO
e.g., brief
product demo
by in-house
expert

MORE MULTIMEDIA AVAILABLE BY REQUEST e.g., "download white paper"

PRE-APPROVED QUOTES FROM CORPORATE EXECUTIVES, ANALYSTS, CUSTOMERS AND/OR PARTNERS

Recommendation: no more than 2 quotes per contact. The PR agency should have additional quotes at-the-ready, "upon request," for journalists who desire exclusive content. This provides opportunity for Agency to add further value to interested media.

LINKS TO RELEVANT COVERAGE TO-DATE (OPTIONAL)

This empowers journalist to "take a different angle," etc.
These links would also be cross-posted to the custom del.icio.us site.

BOILERPLATE STATEMENTS



RSS FEED TO CLIENT'S NEWS RELEASES

"ADD TO DEL.ICIO.US"

Allows readers to use the release as a standalone portal to this news



TECHNORATI TAGS/"DIGG THIS"



PR –e- View – Expert views

Mr G Shrikanth, Technology Correspondent, Data Quest shrikanthg@cybermedia.co.in
“Avoid sending huge pictures to journalists, without permission”

I would like to share the issue of sending huge pictures with press releases. Some of the PR agencies keep sending huge picture files with the release. I am perplexed because it chokes up my whole email and bandwidth is still a scarce commodity in India. How ridiculous it goes, here is an example, sometime back I received a press release from a PR agency, and

the company logo alone is 3MB. Does it make any sense?

I think agencies should check the journalist before, whether they need pictures and send it only to those who require it and not to everyone.



PR eTTY - Relax



A man was sleeping in his house. Suddenly Yama (God of death) appeared before him and said “Go and

enjoy. Nothing will happen to you for next 10 years”.

He did so. He met with an accident and died.

In heaven, he asked Yama, “Why did you lie to me”

Yama replied, “Sorry son, appraisal time.... Had to achieve target!”.

(Source: unknown)

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