

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS: GLOBAL SCENARIO

by

Subhojit Roy, Partner and Co Founder, Connections PR

Corporate Communications: Global Scenario

Today's world being a Global village, effective communication is necessary. When people need to communicate across the world actually manifests the importance of global communications. Instant contact has become the norm and expectation. The importance of communication skill is how one puts order in the chaos of human interaction.

Communication skills help people understand each other and make it possible for mutual growth. Supporting and helping each other has helped in humanity's progress and helped us survive. Communication skills help us remain united and solidarity prospers, without the skills disparate views would clash leading to violence and misunderstandings.

Knowing your audience is the first and most effective step of communications is to know your audience. Most of the business organizations, company's data which include the profile, history, financial and employee strength are available to the world by the click of a mouse, so if you are unprepared you shall be sitting ducks. If you're not prepared you could end by being a viral in today's world of internet based communication. Communicating with your customers, your suppliers, your stockholders, and many other stakeholders are factored into the global equation. Proper handling of any complaint is as important - one insensitive or negative comment could be viewed by millions on Twitter. Owners need to keep themselves informed about any business related information great details and employees have to be able to be in constant contact in order to reach deadlines. Even governments need to be involved in the communications strategy, and having a good one can save you a major embarrassment and problems.

A decade back we got introduced to new platforms called YouTube, Skype, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and various such programs. Now these are household names that are used on a daily basis at home and in the office. But in a business environment, there is more to communications than just opening up Skype and connecting to the other side of the planet. Learning the importance of global communications and implementing with an effective communications policies are key to helping a global organization thrive in this new world.

Understanding and affecting the meaning of Global communication would certainly be the intercultural factor.

Now that we do business on multiple continents, understanding the difference between two countries of language and cultural divide can bridge gaps and make business development smoother and easier. Even within a continent there are several cultures, languages and customs which needs to understood to enable growth and in a global world, it is absolutely vital.

Technology is the biggest factor if one analyzes the changes in global communications and the changes have multifarious in technology and almost every day there is something new coming up. But faster and communication does not mean it is a brilliant or even a good idea. A very valid example is video conferencing while brings face to face cutting across several thousand kilometres but it is a prohibitively expensive technology and one must consider the utility of such an installation.

This is just a few one off issues of the many issues that affecting global communications on a regular basis.

And with an ever-growing globalized world where trade and commerce play a vital role and engagement of different stake holders from various parts of the world is growing the importance of global communications becomes more relevant and of vital importance.

Studying Communication ideally prepares one to understand the various tools and techniques to tackle the negative issues and to formulate an effective and strong communication strategy. Understanding the core concepts and specific examples helps to cope with the ever-changing world and be ready to guide your organization to new heights in a global world.

Communications and its language is ever changing and evolving because change is the only constant. Although people are the main reason why communications change, there are a number of other factors why people have to be continually updated on their communication skills. The importance of communication skills is undeniable because of this. As earlier stated communications affected by technology and new words and terminologies have developed to fit the new discoveries in technology as language changes all the time, one must be able to keep up with the change. In other words, a person should have enough knowledge to continue upgrading his or her communication.

We have already seen the changes brought by technology in language. The importance of communication skills lies in the fact that those skills will help man progress with his language.

Communication is affected by culture, language has developed keeping in mind different cultures and different sensibilities.

Good communication skills help in the social interaction of people and communities.

There are several factors helping in the continuous transformation of communication and great contribute towards the development of the communications skills.

The biggest importance of communication skills is the fact that it is the way through which our civilization continues to flourish. The act of passing on knowledge from generation to generation is communication. It is through communication that we manage to continue our discoveries.

Another importance of communication skills lies in expression. Man's experiences in life need an outlet. People need some ways to express themselves in order for others to share their experiences. However, people need communication skills in order to do this effectively. Communication skills mean the difference between a doodle and a masterpiece.

Today, no business can sustain without having a strong internal and external tool of communication. The emergence of new technology and strong power of digital platform help the corporate to realize, to keep intact their corporate communication so that their stakeholders and shareholders perceive their existence positively. Today, corporate communication as a profession is not only challenging and creative but very rewarding and

recognized. Corporate communication as a tool either can brand or devalue the brand any business organization.

Every sector whether it is a PSU or private sector, manufacturing or service sectors, education or NGOs and even Government departments are giving lots of importance to strengthen their Corporate communication department which ultimately helps an organization to manage their internal and external communication.

In the dynamic scenario, it is imperative to note that corporate communication practitioners are the people who manage extremely complex and varied operations of an organization. The function of corporate communication and management functions are aligned together for the benefit of an organization and to achieve a desirable public exposure.

Meaning and Definition of Corporate Communication:-

Philip Kitchen and Don Schultz in “Raising the Corporate Umbrella” (2001, p.106) defines, “*Corporate communication at its simplest is primarily a mechanism for developing and managing a set of relationships with public or stakeholders who could affect the overall performances. These relationships must be viewed in a long-term strategic fashion.*”

Thus, according to the above definition, corporate communication is used to build the image among its audiences to enhance its overall performances.

As per Median Online, an organization who works in the area of corporate communications globally – defines that, “Corporate communication is the strategic initiative taken by a corporate organization to communicate the corporate brand and its core messages to a spectrum of growing audiences in a globalized market environment. At its core, corporate communication is very simple, the way a corporate communicates.”

Further, it identifies that as a strategic initiative, corporate communication helps a brand/firm to create their identity, build the brand and manage its reputation. It goes beyond the traditional method of communication and harnesses the potential of the print, audio-visual and digital media for the company’s reputation. It uses advertising, public relations, community relations, corporate literature, exhibitions, event management, research, sponsorship management, traditional media and IMC (integrated marketing communication) to place organization, products, and services the global marketplace.

Scope of corporate communication:-

Create an identity: – the success of many companies in India like Reliance industries, Tata, Kirloskar group of companies portray that all these companies have created their identity as an organization which is for their people. In the current scenario, where every day, the function of corporate are complex and not vivid, finding an audience for their products, services or companies determine the growth of an organization. Therefore, a company gives preference to use the tools of communications wisely and timely. The corporate communicator/public affairs manager/public relation officers/media liaison officer/media advisor, and corporate communication manager, they all ensure that their corporate connects build an audience group for the growth of an organization.

Build a brand: – corporate in their day to day affairs interacts with two kinds of an audiences, internal and external. The internal audience who may be in form of shareholders, stakeholders or employee of the company carry the pride of association with an organization wherein the external audience are crucial for the future growth of a brand. To balance both the audiences, corporate communication practitioner need to follow the simple approach in mind.

Manage the reputation: Nowadays, the media intervention is very high. The rumor spreads and impacts on organization's reputation, therefore the corporate communicate practitioner manage the task of building the organization reputation and keep its prestige intact.

Develop a communication model: – No organization will make a progress in their isolation approach. It is crucial to communicate with their people on a timely basis. An effective communication model will help an organization to build a strategy which will be beneficial for them in a long run.

The father of public relations, **Edward Bernays & Arthur Page** spoke about the relevance of corporate communication. Bernays said that internal and external communications to be the engineering of consent in the interest of the company. Arthur Page focused to build the goodwill of the company. It is important for a business to influence society through persuasion or convince. Today, corporate communication is not considered just as a job in a

company but a department that is fundamentally creating the social environment of economic value creation and challenges our traditional understanding of communication management. It is extremely relevant in today's flat worldwide interconnectedness world. Corporate communication helps to develop a culture of dialogues, feedback, and flexibility. Any organization which works and goes ahead along with its people is bound to get success and excel in the field.

Companies define their way of communicating values to their people through a developed strategy. Mid to large organization understand the importance of corporate communication and it is imperative for them to incorporate into their organization.

Thus, the future of corporate communication will be more targeted, effective, interactive and informative. It has a potential to shape culture, enable better decisions and significantly move the need for building an engaged workforce to capture the value. It is important for every corporate to recognize the need for communication category and usage of communication tools which has the greatest impact on building a strong organization socially and economic point of view.

Business people without exception can cite instances where a project deadline was not met, a customer complaint was not handled well or stockholders were not well informed about the status of the business. While there are usually extenuating circumstances that caused the glitch, almost always poor or inadequate communication was part of the problem. Good business communication could have helped alleviate the situation.

Good Business Communication

Good communication means the intended message you send is received by your audience without any distortions in meaning. This definition applies to not only personal communication among friends or relatives, but to business situations where you may be communicating with a co-worker one-on-one or in a meeting with several or more people. The key here is clarity.

Good Communicators Generally Do Good Work

Good business communication helps get the job done well, on time and on budget. The boss or team member who can communicate objectives, reasoning and step-wise tasks in a concise and coherent manner contributes more to a company's success than one who does not. These communicators are highly valued in today's complex and competitive business world, and are often earmarked for promotion and increased responsibility.

Controlling Communications Flow

Today there are many more ways to communicate than there were just a few years ago and access to communication devices is almost universal in most businesses. Communication is also almost instantaneous. The ease with which you can use a laptop, cell phone or other device to communicate with co-workers, clients and others has made doing business easier. But, it can have drawbacks. To ensure your business is using modern communication effectively make sure you have ways to archive information for later access. For example, a salesperson needs to archive email messages from and to clients so that exact job specs are readily available and jobs are handled properly.

Cross-Cultural Communication

In today's global economy, businesses cannot ignore the importance of cross-cultural communication. Businesses are finding that it is in their best interest to learn about national, cultural and ethnic groups they need to communicate with to grow their businesses. Knowledge of language nuances and local customs are important to that growth as a misstep can cause a lost sale or a delayed project.

Keep It Simple

Good business communication is simple and easily understood, a rule often overlooked by managers and team members. This is especially important when preparing a document, speech or presentation that is a game-changer for the company. Simple and concise language wins over language that is obtuse and hard to understand.

Communications Trends

The Challenge- Digitalisation is empowering end users and increasing competition for share of voice and share of market. There has been a rapid shift in societal expectations around access to information and transparency—and also a desire for more two-way dialogue and an opportunity to input ideas. Digital platforms, as a means of stakeholder engagement, feature largely in the communications toolbox. Given the disintermediation of news distribution, companies need to be innovating but also get more comfortable with their lack of overt “control” over content. The website is now, more than ever, a channel that significantly influences perceptions of a company, but it must also be consistent with the real-world experience of the brand. Information is now exchanged in “real time” and perceptions flip in

an instant. There will be a balance between choosing to “rebut” a point of view versus letting it ride out and see if champions come through for the brand and then rebalancing.

Corporate communications departments have long been the fifth wheel. When sales and revenue drop, it’s the first group to have headcount and budgets slashed. However, with the evolution of the industry over the past few years – from shrinking newsrooms to new marketing software and social media networks – CCOs and CMOs are finally getting a real seat at the C-suite table, as leadership understands now more than ever the direct impact both marketing and PR can have on all aspects of the business. Nonetheless, with greater understanding comes more pressure to deliver. Today’s communications roles now span brand awareness and brand equity as well as sales growth – all of which are deemed successful...or not successful – through quantitative measurements.

In the next five years, digital storytelling shall rank above the rest, followed by social listening, social purpose and big data. That’s a dynamic combination and a striking example of how the industry has changed. Emerging technologies, like VR and AI, fall further down the list.

Revenue agencies generate from earned media will decline over the next five years, while revenue from paid, shared and owned will increase. Corporate media budgets are moving even faster towards owned and paid. Supporting that direction, 60% of all PR executives believe that branded content and influencer marketing, which is both primarily paid, will be important trends in the next five years. This changing media mix creates an opportunity and a challenge.

The opportunity is to move aggressively into paid content, an arena long dominated by advertising. This will require PR professionals to master media buying, which currently ranks last on the list of skills they think are important to the future. Majority believe consumer of the future will not make a distinction between paid and earned media. Another one-third disagree. The answer to that debate has profound ramifications for everyone.

With these newly defined roles and greater responsibility, traditional corporate communications teams are restructuring and rethinking how to effectively market their

companies. To succeed, they must be more focused on delivering multimedia content, creating integrated campaigns and consistently demonstrating ROI.

Marketing and PR – traditionally siloed business units with different messages and goals – have been increasingly joining forces in recent years. Only 8% of PR and marketing professionals believe that PR will continue as a distinct and separate function in five years. Therefore, agencies have had to quickly adapt to meet the evolving needs of clients, as this convergence is fundamentally changing the way today’s corporate communications teams are structured. With both of these departments now developing more unified campaigns and strategies centered around consumer-centered experiences, there is a natural increase in collaboration. In fact, 73% of CMOs now oversee PR.

However, with the expanded CMO role comes greater accountability, increasingly tied to sales-driven key performance indicators (KPIs). Simply issuing a press release and securing a great feature in a tier-one publication to generate awareness, and creating “impressions” equivalent to advertising (AVEs), is no longer enough.

An integrated approach is needed to maximize visibility, which translates into increased web traffic and ultimately conversions. From SEO-optimized press release headlines and social media ads to marketing automation and demand gen campaigns each designed to “nurture” the relationship, integration is critical to engage potential customers at every touch point during their buyer’s journey. However, 70% of marketers still lack a consistent or integrated content strategy, with the biggest challenge, of course, being lack of resources.

To combat this challenge, more internal communications teams are leaning on integrated agencies for a wide variety of specialized talent (not just bodies) like SEO, social media, marketing automation, traditional media relations and digital marketing. In fact, Gartner recently reported that CMOs have actually spent more on external agencies than technology in 2017.

Let’s face it; the consumer is large and in charge. Nearly every industry is experiencing a shift in power from vendor to consumer, forcing marketers and PR pros to throw aside traditional campaigns in order to effectively communicate with today’s digitally savvy, always-on consumer.

Today’s consumers want to be engaged at every stage of their buying journey and are quick to jump ship if another brand catches their eye. In fact, the average B2B customer is already

almost 60% through the buying journey before they even speak with a salesperson. In other words, if a business isn't capturing the attention of a potential buyer online in the early stages via social media, earned media, email marketing, and Google AdWords, there's a good chance they'll ultimately make their purchase from another vendor that's created a more engaging experience.

Therefore, many corporate communications teams have gone back to the drawing board to shift mindsets and adopt completely new strategies in order to create the experience this next generation of consumers craves and expects.

Sixty percent of marketers create at least one piece of content each day and it's consuming corporate communications departments. Content is no longer just traditional written communications, such as a blog, contributed article or whitepaper. To engage consumers, additional types of content are also necessary, such as a video on YouTube, an infographic on a corporate website, a Periscope Live broadcast, a GIF on company's Instagram account or a poll on Twitter.

And it's getting personal. To reach target audiences, drive website traffic and ultimately conversions, marketers need to produce highly-targeted, personalized content that aligns with each stage of the buyer's journey. To be truly effective, companies require a strategic combination of earned, owned, paid and shared content that's SEO-optimized. And, a consistent cadence is also critical. According to HubSpot, businesses publishing more than 16 posts a month get almost 3.5 times more traffic than businesses publishing four or fewer articles. Furthermore, as reporters continue to be stretched too thin, they are turning to PR pros to fill the gaps, requesting more contributed, ready-to-go content.

What does this mean for in-house marketers? To create a consistent stream of diverse custom content, corporate communications teams need to have great writers (easier said than done) with a hybrid skill set that encompasses digital, social, analytics and creative. In fact, research shows that almost one in two content jobs today requires SEO skills.

Although 63% of marketers still keep their content marketing in-house, many are outsourcing – not only to fill the void but also to gain access to talent they are struggling to find on their own. In fact, 45% of ad and marketing execs are challenged by finding quality content team members, according to The Creative Group.

Is all this content worth it? Absolutely! Content marketing costs 62% less than traditional marketing and generates about three times as many leads. Plus, conversion rates are six times higher for companies and brands using content marketing than those that aren't.

For years CMOs and their teams struggled to effectively track, measure and report the impact of a marketing or PR campaign to the C-suite. However, the emergence of big data in recent years has not only transformed the way marketers track campaign performance but also give them the insights from performance data that enables them to modify and optimize future campaigns. Industry practitioners who don't adapt to this analytical approach will have difficulty proving their long-term value.

However, dealing with massive amounts of data from multiple vendors tracking a variety of mediums in various formats can be a daunting task. In fact, 61% of marketers feel overwhelmed by data. Fortunately, there are a growing number of cost-effective software and analytics tools available on the market today to help simplify the data mining and analytics process. At our agency, we use tools like Google Analytics and Sprout Social to help track and optimize campaign performance for our clients.

To help the clients rise above the noise and adapt to the future of PR and marketing to create engaging, integrated campaigns that drive measurable impact, a new model is being embraced, called the Panoramic Approach.

There is a reason to believe that the most relevant factor in making companies sustainable will be reputation. Companies' corporate values are more significant than ever, and organizations should incorporate them into their narratives.

From a more strategic point of view, companies should also be able to define their playing field. Companies that choose a specific area to focus on will develop interesting content for their communities. This leads us to the next point; companies will have to find the communities that could be interested in their content, product and services.

Reputation is a great asset for businesses, and it is expected to become the most relevant factor in making companies sustainable in the coming years. Communication teams, directors and consultancies need to be able to integrate ethical behavior, coherence, emotion,

transparency and responsibility in the corporate communication standards of the organizations in order to be at the forefront.

Creating a reputation is as important as knowing how to measure its impact. Metrics that provide insights into the impacts of communication actions are constantly evolving. Besides, this impact needs to be consolidated; talking without taking action is no longer an option. Communication strategies accompanied by experiences will be essential to consolidate its impact on consumers. It is also important that these actions include CSR actions that are aligned with the business objectives and understood and shared with all stakeholders; from employees to final consumers.

A different look at the Corporate Communications strategy

Future-Proofing PR

Produce deafening silence, remain eloquently silent: Using quiet as a powerful communications tool

Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* on the boundaries of linguistic precision in describing perceived objective facts ends with a sentence that has since become a well-known saying: "What we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence". With that, exactly one hundred years ago, the Austrian philosopher launched the so-called linguistic turn in philosophy, confronting the perceived accuracy of the written and the spoken word with skepticism. In the face of thematic complexity, the call for quiet – or at least for pause and reflection – appears rather absurd to communicators operating in a digital age that has neither temporal nor spatial limitations when it comes to dialogue and exchange. It is therefore not surprising that, when working with powerful communications strategies and effective PR tools, focus is almost always placed on pro-active messaging and transmission, and rarely on active listening – not to mention conscious and targeted silence.

This places prevailing practice in communications departments and agencies in diametrical opposition to the needs of a post-modern economy. Where legality is being replaced by legitimacy as a yardstick in assessing business (and political) activity and where passive goals are being ousted by active interest groups, empathy becomes a key success factor as Daniel Goleman (Emotional Intelligence) and Jeremy Rifkin (Empathic Civilization) have so convincingly portrayed. The problem is that many communicators tend to feel uneasy with quiet, which is why our discipline is shaped by speakers rather than observers (Klein-

Bölting/Klewes 2010). This is all the more surprising given the shift in focus – from monologue to dialogue, from public announcements to moments of quiet, and thus from sending to receiving and a return to the origins of market activity. Published back in 1999, the Cluetrain Manifesto for the Digital Age and its chapter heading “Markets are Conversations” referred to the communicative hand-to-hand combat that has long shaped business dialogue and which was only temporarily displaced by the production and communication demands of the industrial age.

Yet those who strive for dialogue must be able to listen and those who want to listen must be able to endure silence. By rights, they should be able to do so, because the inner ear is the only human organ that is already fully developed before we are born. That said, many PR managers nonetheless perceive quiet as *white torture*. In the quietest place on Earth, the Orfield laboratories in Minnesota in the US (-9 decibels compared to 30 decibels in the average bedroom), people can stand the silence for no more than 45 minutes. In many communications departments, people’s patience appears even shorter. But what must be remembered is that quiet is not only a prerequisite for successful dialogue – it is also a powerful communications tool that can be used to counter the noise of the digital world. Figures of speech like “calm before the storm”, “deafening silence” and “remaining eloquently silent” pay witness to this.

Listening and holding one’s tongue call for self-awareness, openness for other people’s standpoints and patience. They also require the ability for communicative receptiveness to be embedded within the organization. Jim Macnamara, an Australian Professor of Public Communication and the former CEO of a media evaluation company, speaks of the “Architecture of Listening” which every company needs – not just in its technology, but also in its human and institutional skills. In other words, although new options for monitoring and evaluation are useful, they often only highlight the *significance* of medial echo effects and interest-driven campaigns. In many cases, what is far more important in identifying future trends is revealing the *relevance* of an issue in one-to-one discussions and group talks.

Pausing, reflecting and listening in phases of success are of existential importance when the critical fall height has been reached, when an opposing devil’s advocate emerges to rock the stable environment, and when internal and external tones begin to change. As it was also Ludwig Wittgenstein who gave us the saying “words are deeds”, it thus makes sense to use them sparingly – including and especially when managing communications.

