

Vol 2: Issue 2 | Price ₹150/-

# Reputation TODAY

A magazine for Public Relations and Corporate Communications Professionals

## » FOCUS Crisis Communication



### » *Coping in Times of Crisis*

How prepared are you?

## » INTERVIEWS



### **Bela Rajan**

Each crisis has its own nuances & experiences.



### **Atul Ahluwalia**

We should always keep an eye on public opinion.



### **Seema Ahuja**

Social Media has exposed us to misdirected activism.



### **Shekhar Gupta**

Today Public Relations is professional, sophisticated & classier.



#FulcrumAwards

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**Arun Arora**, Cairn India  
**Bob Pickard**, Signal Leadership Communications  
**Carson Dalton**, Facebook India  
**Debasis Ray**, Tata Trusts  
**Deepa Dey**, GSK Consumer Healthcare  
**Gaurav Sinha**, Audi India  
**Humsa Dhir**, Sony Pictures Networks  
**Khushnooma Kapadia**, Marriott Hotels  
**Mahesh Jayaram**, Dell India  
**Moushumi Dutt**  
**Minari Shah**, Amazon India  
**Nandini Goswami**, Abbott India  
**Nitin Thakur**, Max India  
**Poonam Kaul**, PepsiCo India  
**Raza Khan**, Bharti Group  
**Seema Ahuja**, Biocon  
**Shravani Dang**, Avantha  
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C5	Best Use of Integrated Communications
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C7	Best Management of Crisis
C8	Best Use of Internal Communications
C9	Best New Product Launch
C10	Best Use of Media Relations
C11	Best CSR Campaign

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and

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D7	Not for Profit & Associations
D8	Manufacturing
D9	Entertainment & Media
D10	Banking & Financial Services
D11	Services

### SPECIAL AWARDS

E1	In-House Team of the Year - Mid-size (2-4 members)
E2	In-House Team of the Year - Large (5 members or more)
E3	PR Consultancy of the Year - Emerging (INR 5 cr and below)
E4	PR Consultancy of the Year - Mid-size (INR 5 cr to 10 cr)
E5	PR Consultancy of the Year - Large (INR 10 cr to 49 cr)
E6	PR Consultancy Firm of the Year - Giant (INR 50 cr or more)
E7	Life Achievement Award (Decided by the Jury, no entry to be submitted)

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Public Relations Consulting and Crisis are bedfellows. They feed off each other. There is no Crisis Management without Public Relations Consultants and Public Relations Consulting is dull without a Crisis. Any PR professional worth her or his salt will agree that they have grown as individuals largely through preparing for crises and by managing some of them. There may be four phases in every business of which Crisis is one. There are Risks - financial, operational and reputational. There are Issues - these are Risks that have manifested themselves at a base level. If an issue is not managed well, it blows into a Crisis - the phase when the matter has gone beyond control or has found its way to an external environment. And if a Crisis becomes full-blown, then it is a Disaster. There are cases where one or two of the phases are bypassed so a Risk has directly turned into a Disaster. In this edition of Reputation Today we focus Crisis Management.

In our 'Interviews' section this time we focus on two Public Relations veterans - Atul Ahluwalia, who founded First Partners and Bela Rajan, who founded Sampark, which is now part of the Ketchum network. We also spoke with seasoned professional Seema Ahuja from Biocon and Shekhar Gupta from ThePrint. We also have the regular columns and the round-ups of some of the platforms we support.

Our next issue will be published during PRAXIS and that will be a blockbuster as we plan to bring out the list of the 100 Most Important men and women in Corporate Communications and Public Relations. Online nominations and self nominations will open on 7th June. We will then look for 50 men and 50 women in consultancies and in-house to arrive at the list. This is largely reserved for those with over 20 years of experience and certainly over 40 years of age.

We hope you enjoy reading the sixth edition of the magazine and we look forward to your contribution to the portal.



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# KNOWLEDGE FACTORY REPLAY



## Dealing with a Billion People

**Chitra Narayanan**, Senior Journalist, **Suresh Narayanan** CMD, Nestle India and **Vijay Shekhar Sharma**, CEO Paytm



## Is Shakespeare still relevant?

**V S Ravi**, Principal Secretary, Home (Retd) and **Keval Arora**, Professor of English, Kirori Mal College



## Taking Classical Arts to the Masses

**Sudha Raghuraman**, Carnatic Vocalist, **Vikram Sampath**, Historian and Founder, Archive of Indian Music and **Rahul Ram**, Singer-Composer



## She and the City

**Vandana Vasudevan**, Researcher, Urban Studies and **Meena Vaidyanathan**, Founder, niiti consulting



## Quest on Politics

**Rajdeep Sardesai**, Senior Journalist, Quizmaster and Author



## Winners of the Quest on Politics



## Into a Sportsperson's Mind

**G. Rajaram**, Founder, Horizon Sports and **Aparna Popat**, National Badminton Champion



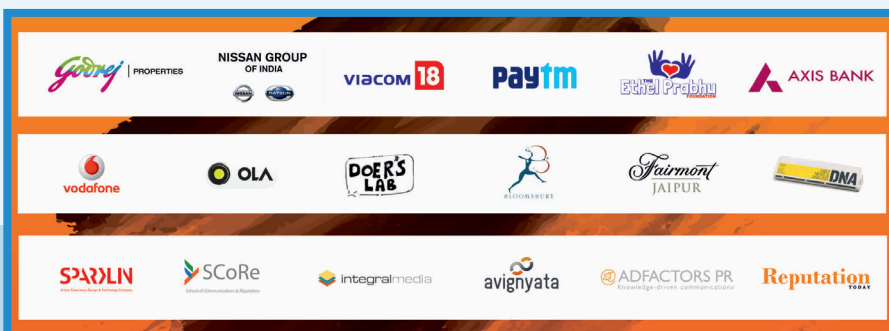
## The Art of Mixing Drinks

**Vikram Achanta**, CEO, Tulleho and **Pankaj Arora**, Mixology Expert



## Rini Simon Khanna

Anchor



Thank you Partners



# KNOWLEDGE FACTORY REPLAY



## Going Green - The Why & the How

**Jairam Ramesh**, Economist and MP  
and **N Madhavan**, Senior Journalist



## Romancing the Constitution

**Swara Bhaskar**, Actor and  
**N Madhavan**, Senior Journalist



## Tickling Your Mind

**Papa CJ**, Stand-up  
Comedian



## Addressing the Urban Crisis

**Bharti Chaturvedi**, Environmentalist,  
**Santosh Desai**, CEO, Future Brands  
and **Partha Mukhopadhyay**, Senior  
Fellow, Centre for Policy Research



## Future of the Millennial

**Anuja Chauhan**, Advertising  
Whiz & Author, **Abhijit Bhaduri**,  
Author & HR Specialist and **Megha  
Vishwanath**, Journalist, CNBC TV 18



## The Registration Team



## Quest on Business

**Gaurav Sri Krishna**



## Winners of the Quest on Business



## Know your Beer

**Pradeep Gidwani**,  
Founder, The Pint Room



## The Knowledge Factory Team



*"No two crises are same and the solutions vary, depending on the time frame as also the culture of the organisations."*

**Bela Rajan**, Founder Director at Ketchum Sampark Public Relations plays a stellar role today. Involved with the Editorial Board of Ad Club, Mumbai and FICCI FLO (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries Ladies Wing – Mumbai Chapter), she is also an independent woman Director on the Boards of public-listed companies.

*In conversation, with Shree Lahiri, she talks about Ketchum Sampark's journey, the crises faced along the way and the future.*



**Ketchum Sampark will be celebrating its silver jubilee soon. How has the journey been?**

**Ans:** It's been a long journey but an exciting and rewarding one. We started at a time when there was little understanding of PR as a profession in India and gradually built our way through. From a culture of a small boutique to be recognised as one of the top PR consultancies in India - we've come a long way and it feels great.



**How has 'Knowledge Studio' contributed to Ketchum's businesses in India and around the globe? How much does digital contribute to Ketchum Sampark's main operations and to the overall revenue?**

**Ans:** Globally, we are much evolved in this area as Ketchum has a huge digital capability. We collaborate with our colleagues across the globe on many projects and this has only improved our product offering. Clearly content and digital is the way to go.

In India, we believe, as a part of the pie, digital will catch up with the traditional over the next three to five years, and may go on to become much larger after that.

Although currently the margins in this space are lesser than some of our traditional offerings, given the potential of this space we continue to invest, besides seeking partnerships within our group, to maintain our leadership.



**Your firm has handled a number of crises along the way. What were the most valuable learnings you picked up, from crisis management?**

**Ans:** Each crisis has its own nuances and experiences. No two crises are same and the solutions vary, depending on the time frame as also the culture of the organisations. So, what's right for one may not be right for the other or, a solution at a point of time may not be the right solution at another. While there was always a realisation that a crisis can paralyse a brand, it is only in recent times, that many of the corporates have begun to invest in a crisis protocol. We are helping many of our clients and organisations in not only proactively putting together a robust process which can mitigate crisis and help to contain it, but also assisting them, as and when one develops the processes.

In fact Crisis Communications is one of our most valued offerings apart from Financial Services, Corporate and Technology practices.





**Where does India feature vis-a-vis the global perspective, as far as the operations go?**

**Ans:** I am happy that we continue to grow steadily and are among the better performers in the Indian market, as also in the Ketchum World. The transformative way in which the Digital/Social has created a gateway to truly borderless opportunities, with India at the heart of it all, will only keep us in good stead.



**What will be your focus in the near future?**

**Ans:** At Ketchum, as a full service business head-quartered in New York, we offer a robust variety of services, whereas, Ketchum Sampark earlier was noted primarily for its very strong offering in corporate and financial. But, as we developed, Ketchum Sampark in recent years, has become the mirror image of Ketchum global; so we have diversified efficiently into the consumer brand space, B2B, technology and one of the fastest growing businesses - digital/social media play where we see tremendous upside. We are transforming the way we do business. So, the clients that are coming to Ketchum Sampark are typically looking for capability in multi-geographies, and services that engage across a number of different practice areas.

We will at an appropriate time introduce Ketchum products and practices like Ketchum Change, Food and Nutrition etc. Creating compelling content that resonates well with the media and the consumer alike will be another focus area in the coming years. It will be critical to how you captivate/engage your audience, especially with the growing number of players/companies focusing on India as an important market. Another trend will be on traditional press releases making way for new and different ways of 'storytelling' and amplifying it across multiple channels.

Analytics will increasingly become important as will Measurement, and as PR practitioners we will have to justify the fees with outcomes and ROIs.



**What is the toughest crisis you have handled?**

**Ans:** In the last 23 years, we have assisted Indian and transnational companies on crisis communication on a wide variety of issues. However, the crisis communication program for the Dabhol Power Company in 2000 was a particularly unique and

challenging assignment for us.

For one, a change in the political dispensation in Maharashtra had led to standoffs on commercial disputes. And two, the project was simultaneously facing resistance from local stakeholders and NGOs on community and environment issues.

Potentially, this meant that the two crises could feed into each other and result in a deadly cocktail that could threaten the very existence of the company.

We took care to sensitively manage the two crises independently - building initiatives for conciliation with the community at one end, and battling the government through point-of-view stories in the media using research and energy sector experts on the other.





# 17 Things to Watch Out For DURING A CRISIS

Not every crisis will be as dramatic as the anti-smoking campaign that Nick Naylor (Aaron Eckhart) - the lobbyist for Big Tobacco had to counter in the movie Thank You for Smoking. So if your publicist isn't as ingenious as Nick Naylor and if you aren't aware of your organisation's blind spots, then you must be ready to endure the reputation damage a crisis could cost you and your brand, affecting your employees, stakeholders and even customers.

At some time, every business, irrespective of their scale, faces a crisis. The art of subsisting during a crisis with as little damage to an organisation's credibility, reputation, and associations as possible can be defined as public relations' objective. Here are the quintessential factors for consideration during a crisis:

- 1 Begin before there is any issue:** *Inform your publicist about any vulnerabilities that could be crisis-prone and devise a strategy to discuss the issue. Do not wait for the crisis to form or aggravate.*
- 2 Media relations as a lifeline:** *It is essential to utilise your brand connect with reporters as your lifeline to manage public perception in the hour of need.*
- 3 Accept you're in crisis and ensure communication:** *It is important to know the exact point when a scenario has moved into crisis. Ensure senior management's interaction is supported by relevant data and constant updates.*
- 4 Don't forget your business objective:** *Lay emphasis on your overall business objective even while confronting a barrage of customer inquiries and media.*
- 5 Remember when the problem arises, the first place to keep a tab is online:** *While online medium can hamper the reputation with misleading information going viral, it can serve as a lifeline by clarifying and putting across your perspective and how you're resolving the issue.*
- 6 Speed shouldn't influence overall strategy:** *It is essential to be proactive but the communication must be thought thoroughly in order to mitigate probable negative public sentiment.*
- 7 All communication channels must be in sync:** *Social media and PR must work in tandem to develop a 360-degree plan that would shield your brand and uphold your brand message.*
- 8 Leaders mustn't take things personally:** *Taking things personally especially when they aren't going your way may backfire. Be logical not defensive!*
- 9 A positive mental attitude:** *The overall demeanor is always under the radar of your employees, particularly during difficult times. Keep your employees hopeful and inspired with a positive mental attitude.*
- 10 Leaders must respond decisively:** *Composure is a quality that every leader must possess. Their communication during a crisis must reflect confidence, authority and conviction.*
- 11 Research on outside elements:** *Which media outlets to contact? What could be their response? Know which of them could be more sympathetic and less aggressive.*
- 12 Accept responsibility:** *It is evident, but it is important for business leaders to take the blame when things go wrong irrespective of who from the organisation is at fault.*
- 13 Do not lash out and refrain from saying "no comments."**
- 14 Do not wait for too long or not long enough to respond:** *Managing a PR crisis is all about timing!*
- 15 Finalise and adapt key messages:** *The crisis communications team must continue to develop messages/statements for any given situation. Keep it simple.*
- 16 Post-crisis analysis:** *A detailed formal analysis of the entire episode including what could have been done better and how to improve elements of crisis preparedness.*
- 17 The final word:** *While being unprepared or under-prepared for crisis is what remains as a majority, chose to be part of the prepared minority - be it a disaster response, crisis communications or business continuity.*



**Gaurav Patra** is the Co-founder and Managing Partner at Value 360.

He has over 22 years of industry experience and currently directs Operations at Value 360.



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*The Public Relations business has been reinvented and will continue to be reinvented.*

**Shekhar Gupta**, is Chairman and Editor-in-Chief of ThePrint, an exciting news media start-up and a senior prime time anchor at NDTV. A recipient of the prestigious Padma Bhushan, Shekhar hosts *Off the Cuff* (an offering from ThePrint), on NDTV 24X7 and NDTV Prime every month and also "Walk the Talk" on NDTV 24x7 every week. Recently, Shekhar's columns National Interest were collected in a bestselling book 'Anticipating India'.

Here are some excerpts from a freewheeling conversation with Shree Lahiri.



**What is the biggest inspiration that keeps you going in your career?**

**Ans:** The biggest inspiration has been the non-stop, rapid face of change in Indian society. And, when I say society, I mean, politics, economy, all kinds of policy areas and demographics (because India is becoming young so fast) and meanwhile, technology is changing around the world. There's a lot of change and that change becomes much more fun in a country like India, which is so diverse and so open.



**Has the PR profession evolved over time? How do you think PR professionals have changed?**

**Ans:** The PR profession has become more professional than before. In the past, PR was mostly about either fixing (old-fashioned fixing) or it was about giving gifts, junkets – so one way or the other, you fixed. Today, it is professional and sophisticated, and if I may say so, classier than before. Good PR people are actually quite useful journalistically now, because they understand the genuine need of the journalist and give good information, good interviews and good stories. They now understand that good "news sense" works better than the old style of PR fixing. So, the PR business has been reinvented and will continue to be reinvented.



**According to you who has a major role to play in a publication - editorial or marketing?**

**Ans:** It varies from publication to publication. There are publications with very good marketing, while some have good synergy between the two. In some, marketing, management and finance take precedence, and in some organisations, editorial is on top. Predominantly, I would say today, if you look at the larger news media, then the "money man" is a lot more powerful. That's also partly because owners are becoming editors and there's been a decline in powerful professional editors with stature. And, that's deliberate. I don't blame the editors for this. The owners have done it.



**In your style - what is right with journalism today, and what is wrong with it?**

**Ans:** Today lots of young talent is coming into journalism. Earlier, it was seen as a dubious profession - if you don't get anything else, you walked into journalism. The new generation of journalists are very articulate, suited to new





platforms and know how to use them really well.

The other thing that's very good with journalism today is that technologies have lowered the entry barriers greatly. If you put entry barriers on a scale of say, 10, today they are not even 1 - financially. So, you don't have to - set up a press or studio, get in workers, buy transponders, pay for distribution, buy news print, ink, nothing! And, yet, you can acquire the same number of audience. The cost of audience acquisition is now a small fraction of what it used to be. There are challenges about monetising it, but the fact is that today you can build a voice and an organisation for a small fraction of what it took in the past, with regards to money and time.



**You had stated that "Voter ko change pasand hai". There was this hash tag #AAPKiChutti that was blazing during the elections results day; how much did the influence of media impact this election?**

**Ans:** Not much. This was mainly because, AAP by and large, has been very smart at interacting with the media; Much smarter than any other party. In fact AAP is the only party which on social media does better than the BJP, because they are smarter, their volunteers are more committed, very well motivated, intelligent, well-educated people. So, they've done really well. I don't think media has played much of a role in this.

I think "Voter ko change pasand hain" because voters elected AAP two years ago, in Delhi. They were not elected forever. They got 67 out of 70 seats because voters wanted change but, it's been over two years and the Delhi voters have seen no change. You know, in a small state like Delhi where they have a small cabinet, how can a Chief Minister say, "I will have no portfolio!" and then not be seen in his state for long spells, because he's campaigning elsewhere? He's really taking the voter for granted. So, the voter again wants change. Can they not resurrect themselves? Certainly, they can. But, they have to focus on Delhi and they have to make the voter feel the difference they had promised, the change they had promised.



**Do you feel the hopes and aspirations of the youth today are different from earlier times?**

**Ans:** Yes, absolutely. I think they believe that there is much less time. Today, they are very ambitious, much more nationalistic, and must get what they want.

The flip side is that their knowledge of how Indian

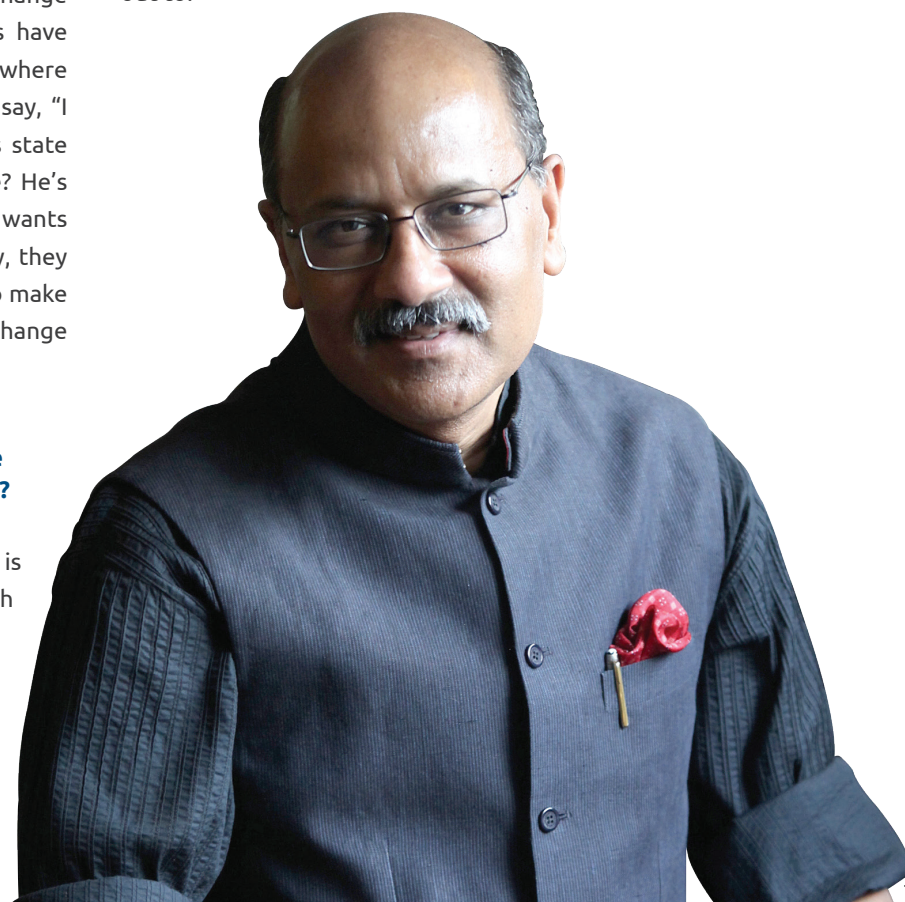
nationalism has evolved, is quite superficial. You can call them the post-Google generation - very few people have any idea of what happened before Google came in. The one concern today is this version of narrow hyper-nationalism that has caught a lot of young people, and not understanding the constitutional liberal values on which the Republic was built. The knowledge of our constitution is very poor. I think if you check around, the youth will find it difficult to differentiate between Directive Principles and Fundamental Rights. So, they say 'cow protection' is a Fundamental Right. No, it's not. It's a Directive Principle.

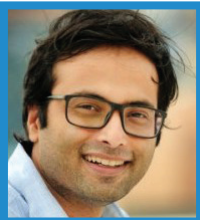


**Sensationalism in media - what are your views? Today it's the 'sensational' that gets TRPs and results in commercial success.**

**Ans:** I feel that is true. Not just with TRPs, but the number of followers, the number of page views. A lot of the life is about numbers. I don't think one should take a judgemental view on that.

This is a market in which, Dabangg is a big hit but Dangal is also a big hit. So, everything has its place. The demographics of your audience are very important, in terms of who you are directing your message at and, that similarly works for the advertisers. It's like in medicine, you have targeted molecular drugs which means instead of giving antibiotics to your entire body you can apply something that reaches the place where the problem is. So, the media now, has to also customise and it has to decide, what audience we want to address and reach out to.





### How to communicate Crisis?

#### Mahul Brahma

Head - Corporate Communications  
mjunction Services Limited

I should have flown with someone else, or gone by car, 'cause United breaks guitars.

Musician Dave Carroll said his guitar was broken while in United Airlines' custody. He arrived at his destination to discover that his \$3,500 Taylor guitar was severely damaged. After harassment from the United Airlines, he wrote the song "United Breaks Guitars".

To read the complete article, please visit:

<http://bit.ly/RTHCCrisis>



### Going Social on Crisis

#### Swapna Bhandarkar

Head - Corporate Communications  
ICICI Securities Limited

The pen is mightier than the sword, goes an old adage. But in today's social media age, the smartphone clearly makes the cut. Be it natural disasters, oil spills, product failures or even unsatisfactory services, technical glitches to corporate accounts being hacked are all the new-age crises being played out via social media, with citizen journalists capturing smartphone video footage and tweeting events as they unfold.

To read the complete article, please visit:

<http://bit.ly/GoingSocialonCrisis>



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## Crisis: Coping in Times of chaos

In today's highly volatile communications environment, anything can be a crisis flashpoint - a single event, a rumor, wrong use of a word... and, a story spirals out of control.

A crisis could hit an organisation any time. Once that happens, there is little time to think, and lesser time to plan. The key to effective crisis communication management is to be prepared before a crisis occurs.

### So how prepared are you?



With corporate crises common today, the corporate communicator's role has become more difficult and demanding - stemming the tide of rumors, mediating among leading corporate decision-makers and delivering clear, concise messages to internal and external audiences.

Regardless of the circumstances, every crisis has the potential to impact a company's reputation. Companies must have a clear understanding of their audience - employees, customers or a community and then, tailor a crisis management plan.

#### Mastering chaos

In today's highly volatile communications environment, anything can be a crisis flashpoint. American business magnate and philanthropist Warren Buffett, had said, "It can

take 20 years to build a reputation and only five minutes to ruin it." Currently, it may take even less time. The public's seemingly insatiable appetite for information and demand for accountability, transparency often ignite it out of control. This reality has fundamentally changed how communicators must plan and respond to crises. At the root of this change is a mindset shift from prioritising rapid response to one that demands constant vigilance and preparedness, where the chaos is not just contained and controlled, but mastered.

To master the moments that define crisis communications today, PR professionals must develop a strategy to match.

#### Coming to terms with chaos or crisis

Few circumstances test a company's reputation or



competency as severely as a crisis. The concept of crisis management has become a specialised activity in the domains of communications and public relations. Whether the impact is immediate or sustained over time, a crisis affects stakeholders within and outside. Customers cancel orders. Employees raise questions. CEOs face questions. Shareholders get restless. Competitors sense opportunity. Governments and regulators come knocking. Interest groups swing into action. Lawyers are not far behind.

Being constantly exposed to political and corporate wrongdoings, there is a demand that corporations become transparent in their operational practices, financial reporting and social responsibility. The best practice is to engage your public, your community, your employees and your business partners on each of these three fundamental areas. Companies must explain to their publics how they are doing socially, as a corporate citizen; financially, with their annual reports; and environmentally. Are they promoting the environment? Are they a good neighbour?

### Challenges faced today

Reputation has always been vital to business, but, the exponential growth of digital communications has made it more vulnerable than ever. The main challenge today is social media and the immediacy of information flow that is real-time. In this ever-changing digitally-advanced world, crisis now takes only a few hours or sometimes even a few minutes to spread; and this is why we need to act fast.



**Radha Roy,**  
Country Head & Managing  
Director, RuderFinn India

"Gone are the days when we could call on a boardroom meeting and then brainstorm on the crisis communications strategy. Today, we need to have acted yesterday. By that I mean, we need to predict the crisis before it even occurs."

This in turn can be very challenging, if the right set of tools/trigger points are not embedded in the system and can cause chaos and confusion in communications.

In many cases, some clients don't invest in Online Reputation

Management (ORM) and, therefore, do not have the intelligence to react instantly. The other challenge is preparedness as in most cases clients wake up to this need only after a crisis hits.



**Ameer Ismail,**  
Executive Director,  
GolinOpinion

"We have several instances where clients have gotten into panic mode after things have already spiraled out of control and then expect the consultancy to stop/block negatives."

"The challenges faced today are generally the same as have always been faced with the obvious exception of a data breach. Data breaches are now so common that it's hard to keep up and in any given week there are reports of attacks across all sectors and geographies", says Chetan Mahajan, President & CEO of Hill+Knowlton Strategies, India.

The vulnerability today however, is not limited to obvious catastrophes such as a plant explosion or product recall; rather, social media makes a crisis out of an innocent photo taken by an employee, a careless tweet from an executive, or a falsehood posted on Facebook by someone with an axe to grind or five minutes to kill. More importantly with the emergence of video and growth of language media whatever happens is amplified almost instantly. The challenge is on containing the same with a timely response.

"Swift action, transparency, putting yourself out there to be available 24X7 and sometimes taking a stance are critical aspects of dealing with crisis," observes Valerie Pinto, CEO, Weber Shandwick, India.

"Facing crisis in today's scenario has become extremely difficult due to many factors like: dealing with speed of information, heightened activism and credibility deficit", explains Venkatesh Somayaji, Senior VP, Crisis & Litigation, Adfactors PR.

### Planning for crisis: minimising chaos

A corporation must be meticulous about its crisis management plans, and a large portion of the corporate communicator's time is focused on what to do in times of crisis. A tested crisis communications plan is instrumental in



minimising chaos. Communication policies and procedures should be developed as part of the planning phase, not on the verge of, during, or after a disaster.

Response communications must be timely, transparent, and dynamic in order to defuse incident escalations and potential rumors. Unfortunately, during the height of a crisis, the bleak reality often alters the storyline, promoting misinformation.

## Types of Crisis

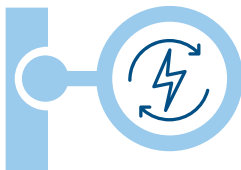


### People Crisis

(Abuse / Violence / Ethics / Fraud / Layoffs)

### Environment Crisis

(Emission / Violation / Malpractice)

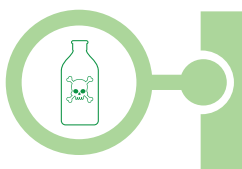
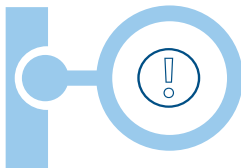


### Financial Crisis

(Bankruptcy / Loss / Bribery)

### Technological Crisis

(Recall / Fault / Breakdown / Glitches)

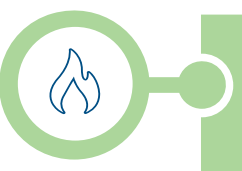


### Contamination

(Food adulteration / Drug poisoning)

### Government linked/ Geo-Political Crisis

(Policy related / Change of administration)



### Disaster

(Natural / Crash / Manmade / Fire)



### Chetan Mahajan,

President & CEO,  
Hill+Knowlton Strategies,  
India

"While a crisis is, by its very nature difficult to predict, it doesn't mean that it can't be prepared for. If you are responsible for the reputation of your company when a crisis hits, there are really only two options: implement your crisis response plan, or begin to search the situations vacant pages."

It is important to never lose sight of the fact that your company will be judged not just for the crisis, but for your company's handling of it. Fundamentally, any crisis response plan should involve a cross-functional team that represents all the organisational functions. While it is difficult to predict the precise nature of a crisis, holding statements, stakeholder mapping, social media responses and spokespeople training can all be prepared in advance. The key is ensuring your crisis response plan can be activated at a moment's notice and that roles and responsibilities are clear – simulation exercises are essential to put this to the test.

It is best to believe that despite any amount of planning, a crisis situation will test the mettle of the organisation, else it would not qualify as a crisis in the first place!



### Valerie Pinto,

CEO, Weber Shandwick,  
India

"We have been globally recognised for FireBell and have trained several clients in the healthcare, telecom, food, consumer durables and other such segments that are prone to crisis."

At GolinOpinion, they have a clear process defined to tackle crisis issues effectively. Plans are developed to allow the organisation to triage situations, make decisions and take quick action. They are direct enough to serve as a strong





guide while still being flexible enough to allow room for improvisation that is often needed in a crisis, explains Ameer Ismail. It is critical to train and organise teams to be prepared in the hour of a crisis. For that, “we custom-build trainings and simulations to test teams, stress test crisis plans and prepare client teams to handle just about anything that may come their way,” adds Chetan Mahajan. The trainings are comprehensive and participants learn and practice skills in handling traditional media relations, social media response, operational issues, internal communications and third-party stakeholder communications.

It is vital that employees of an organisation are up to speed on how to use and manage social media effectively in a crisis. Those who lead social media within an organisation may also face situations where they need to manage sudden, large-scale negative stories or major incidents. For this purpose, to predict and manage crisis most effectively, Radha Roy informs they have a set of three tools and trainings at RuderFinn, Asia.

- 1) Sonar, which is their training platform that allows teams to experience the dynamic environment of a fast-developing social media issue or crisis in real-time.
- 2) RiskSTAT, an advanced marketing tool that delivers predictive analytics, influencer mapping that enables you to be armed and ready.
- 3) Beacon (Analytics suite), a listening tool that finds ways to turn massive amounts of data into relevant insights.

FireBell is Weber Shandwick’s interactive proprietary training tool that has been recognised the world over as one of the most advanced tools used for preparing clients to deal with crisis. This tool allows companies to understand the issues and crisis environment online, develop effective communication and social media plans to prepare for an

issue, and train in a live real-time crisis environment through our simulation tool, discusses Valerie Pinto.



**Venkatesh Somayaji,**

Senior VP, Crisis & Litigation, Adfactors PR

“A few fundamental crisis management plans like ensuring regular safety audits for all prescribed processes guidelines (safety, mandatory documentations and adherence, etc), ensuring availability of crisis management teams that are always prepared and can take decisions, strong stakeholder engagement and creation of transparent and dependable information platforms must be put in place.”

### Weathering a crisis: the last word

During a crisis recovery, the question of regaining trust often pops up. As the crisis comes under control, a company should examine the impact the incident has had on its brand(s) and reputation. Companies should consider a broad range of potential communication initiatives to restore trust and loyalty.

A company that weathers a crisis well, understands that opportunity can come out of adversity, has managed its crisis response well, coupled with an effective recovery program, will leave stakeholders with a favourable impression and renewed confidence.

## Learnings... Tips... Next Steps



### Chetan Mahajan:

With dedicated organisational focus, a robust crisis response plan and a lot of practice, it is possible to mitigate reputational damage of a crisis.



### Ameer Ismail:

Each crisis brings with it a new set of learnings – Be prepared. Be vigilant. Communicate even more during a crisis and continue communicating even after the crisis.



**Valerie Pinto:**

Don't hide. Don't disappear. Be available. Take the situation head on. Talk to stakeholders ... all of them. Work on solutions instead of contemplating how to stop a story.



**Venkatesh Somayaji:**

Don't try to cover up or go in denial mode as this only makes crisis management more painful and prolonged. Weather the storm purely on its own merit and fundamental integrity.



**Radha Roy:**

Don't turn off communications just because times are tough. People will want to hear from you. Apologise when needed. Your clear communication can certainly minimise the damage.

# PR PUNDIT

## REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

## IMPACTFUL COLLABORATIONS

DELHI | MUMBAI | BENGALURU



## Top Corporate Communication Teams

There are over a thousand companies in India that have a communications leader. This is a back-of-the-envelope estimate. Even if the Top 25 firms had an average of 40 clients, we would reach a four-digit figure. These companies include listed companies, private limited companies and multinational companies. There are at least 300 companies that have a communications team, which means two or more people managing this function on their own or with the help of a PR firm. Around a dozen teams have gained prominence in the last couple of years for the great work they do, the amazing campaigns they run, the sheer number of awards they win and the magnitude of the mandate they have. It was time to recognise these teams and we chose to zero in on 30 of these and make this an annual list. In addition to recognition, this list will also help achieve the following objectives -

- Offer inspiration to teams that did not make it to the list this year
- Appreciate great teams who are working to build brands using the power of Public Relations
- Put the spotlight on men and women who work behind the scenes so that more and more companies hire communication teams

### How was the list arrived at?

We invited nominations from teams on social media and on our portal in the month of March. Over 50 teams submitted information that was collected and sorted by the content team. Based on the data that the teams shared, they were scored on various parameters out of 14. Thereafter a four-member jury independently evaluated the Top 30 teams and gave a score out of 10 each. The total was then tabulated to arrive at the ranking of the Top 30 teams. There were several teams that tied at similar scores.

We thank the jury that consisted of **Kanchana TK**, Director General - OPPI; **Aparna Jain**, CEO - Zebraa Works and Executive Coach; **Girish Huria**, Head of Communications -

eBay India and **Jaideep Shergill**, Founding Partner - Pitchfork Partners. Our gratitude to Kaizzen Communications and its leader **Vineet Handa** for sponsoring this list in its inaugural year.

### What we looked for in the teams?

Size did not matter as long as it was a team, which meant two or more members. We looked for the following while evaluating the teams:

- Award-winning work in the previous year and stand-out campaigns
- Reporting structure of the Team Lead
- Budgets that the team had to carry out its campaigns
- Different aspects the team managed, other than media relations (CSR / digital / internal communications)
- General perception of the organisation

Only teams that submitted a nomination by filling out the questionnaire were considered. So, there could be teams that deserve to be there but did not feature only because they did not participate. There is always the next year.

### What's next?

In addition to the honour of being listed and celebrated on social media, teams that feature here may get rewarded by the management of their respective companies. Teams may look forward to two other key initiatives in the year, including **40 under Forty** and the **Fulcrum Awards**. We will also run a series of articles contributed by members of the 30 Top Teams to offer them visibility on our portal.

To those who made the cut, our heartiest congratulations. To those who did not, there's always a next time.



# 30 TOP CORPORATE COMMUNICATION TEAMS



Top Corporate Communication Teams

Powered by

**Kaizzen** Communications  
looking beyond

## The 2017 List

- |    |                          |          |  |   |                        |        |
|----|--------------------------|----------|--|---|------------------------|--------|
| 1  | amazon                   | godrej   | viacom 18                                    |   |                        |        |
| 4  | paytm                    | 5        | gsk<br>do more<br>feel better<br>live longer |   |                        |        |
| 6  | GE                       | PEPSICO  | 8  | Ford                                    | vedanta                |        |
| 10 | OLA                      | 11       | Coca-Cola                                    | policybazaar.com<br>Compare. Buy. Save. |                        |        |
| 13 | bharti                   | Biocon   | intel  | Microsoft                               | SONY PICTURES NETWORKS |        |
| 18 | IL&FS Financial Services | mahindra | NIIT   | 21                                      | idea                   | NISSAN |
| 23 | MAX                      | YES BANK | 25   | Arvind                                  | LARSEN & TOUBRO        |        |
| 27 | citi                     | IIFL     | ORACLE                                       | 30                                      | Infosys                |        |



*With the advent of social media, PR today has become all-encompassing and powerful.*

**Atul Ahluwalia**, is the Founding Partner of First Partners, a premier communications consultancy which focuses on driving business outcomes through communications. Over a 25-year long career in public relations, Atul has spearheaded many award winning PR campaigns in the country, for companies in industries such as FMCG, aviation, banking, consumer electronics, hospitality, technology and telecommunications. Atul is the former Vice Chairman of Weber Shandwick, India and a Founding Member & Ex Chairman of the Constitutional and Advisory Committee, Public Relations Consultants Association of India.

*In a candid talk with Shree Lahiri, he speaks extensively on how PR has evolved, issue management and public affairs methodologies, integrating digital media and more...*



**According to you, two areas which need strong focus are - Issue Management and Public Affairs. Please elaborate.**

**Ans:** Issue management and public affairs methodologies are increasingly becoming central to all strategic PR programs today. Many use public affairs and government relations interchangeably which is not correct. At the heart of a public affairs programme is the need to shape public opinion. This is becoming relevant even in case of traditional specialisations like consumer PR or technology PR. There is growing consumer activism and mistrust in the consumer space too, which eventually impacts the sentiments of stakeholders other than consumers, and thus business success. Practitioners who keep an eye on the big picture, on how public opinion is shaping as a result of day-to-day campaigns will bring greater strategic value to the function.



**How have you integrated digital media with the operations of your PR firm?**

**Ans:** I am amazed at the speed with which digital content has been replacing traditional delivery vehicles in India as well. Today, there is a growing segment of businesses, who accord higher priority to digital visibility than print as their customers are there.

At First Partners, we had the opportunity to re-set the mix from the very first day to make digital communication core to everything we do. We believe digital and traditional skills should not be represented by separate teams and hence all our members are encouraged to think in a media agnostic manner.



**It was after a long haul of more than two decades in the business, that you departed from Weber Shandwick, India. How has the shift been, after you set up First Partners with PR veteran Dilip Yadav?**

**Ans:** It has been an exhilarating journey for us so far. We expanded the founding team by acquiring Go2Media founded by Santanu Gogoi and have been able to grow quickly.

Our vision was to start a firm which took PR to the next level and addressed existing gaps in the business. Towards this end, we believe that PR must drive business outcomes and not bring about perception shifts alone. This is when PR would be valued as a first-level function. This is why we named our firm First Partners!

First Partners team comprises senior professionals who



have a good understanding of business needs as well as communication. To complement this, we have built a team of Domain, Research, Content and Digital specialists who work together with one mission – to help drive clients' business outcomes.



### What are the challenges of the new-age professionals, who have entered the workforce - the Millennials?

**Ans:** The new-age professionals are very good in embracing technology and can relate very well with the behavioural context of the new-age consumer. However, to be successful in a country as diverse as India, where the mass market is still traditional, they need to be cautious and not get overtly swayed by the new age.

I hear from several clients that while they are happy with the digital communication recommendations of the younger members they miss the traditional media inclusion which is still core to many. A good PR professional needs to be well-rounded and be able to respond to all kinds of situations. This requires getting one's feet onto the street, understanding the traditional audience as well and building relationships at multiple levels.



### What would you outline as the key growth drivers for your firm in 2017?

**Ans:** On the business side, our firm's key growth driver would be our "Business Outcome" model. Given our extensive experience over the past two decades of some of India's most memorable campaigns, we have evolved an advanced model for driving business outcomes through communication.

On the talent side, we have pioneered a unique entrepreneurial model where we provide a platform to like-minded senior PR professionals to independently operate as entrepreneurs and manage their practices. Our own experience told us that after a successful run in the profession many senior practitioners miss being able to stay close to what they enjoy most, like creating path-breaking campaigns, as they get drawn into other issues. However, there are few options which offer them the security of a big firm as well as the freedom of an entrepreneurial set-up. This is where the First Partners model has

several firsts in the way we structure our association with our partners.



### How has the world of Public Relations evolved over the years?

**Ans:** Over the last decade Public Relations has evolved both as a discipline and a practice. The discipline has gotten better integrated with other communication functions. In many instances PR has acquired the lead communication role, which was earlier the prerogative of advertising. As a practice, PR has become more creative and compelling with the inclusion of sophisticated skills in content development and production. With the advent of social media, PR today has become all-encompassing and powerful.







*A prudent communicator is one who can manage the crisis effectively by being prepared for it rather than the one catching up with it.*

**Bhavna Singh**, is the Director  
- Communications at Organisation of  
Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI).

## **You might be a crisis management expert if...**

- you remain calm even when your boss is panicking over an issue
- you can write a 600-word piece on Crisis in ten minutes
- you can make lemonade with ANYTHING you have on hand

On a more serious note, the Oxford Dictionary defines crisis as '**A time of intense difficulty or danger**'. Crisis can overwhelm even the best of us, so much so, that during crisis, we are so caught up trying to diffuse the situation that we do not think it is important to communicate. Remember, it is not necessary to share every detail of your company crisis, but letting the public know that the company is working on a solution has a positive effect. Understand - you already have

a crisis at hand to handle; by not communicating you are only going to bring about a PR crisis as well.

So, what is crisis communication? The Management Study Guide defines it as, '**Crisis communication is an initiative which aims at protecting the reputation of the organisation and maintaining its public image.**' And, why should there be a crisis communication plan. You need to be ready, responsive and agile to manage crisis and a robust crisis communication plan is not just in a red binder on everyone's office shelf but is something that can be put into action, instantaneously.

While it might seem preachy, a pinch of prevention is worth a mound of cure. And if crisis cannot be contained then seek possible ways to turn it into an opportunity.

The key to a successful crisis communication plan is the narrative. It relies on both - the story and the story teller. The spokesperson becomes the key driver. A lot of the crisis management depends on training the spokesperson on being ready to respond in a way that optimises the response of all stakeholders.

## **Here are a few tips to keep you prepared to face the big C:**

- **Make a plan** - Consider the various crises that could evolve.
- **Prepare a list** - Detail every stakeholder that needs to be reached out to in crisis communications.
- **Truth alone triumphs** - Do not lie. If an error is done, admit it. Apologise when needed.
- **Talk to employees** - Keeping silent and avoiding conversations internally is the worst way to handle the crisis.
- **Handle the media** - Deal with the media transparently. Use the company website to speak to the media and the public.

To summarise, crisis can happen to anyone at anytime. A prudent communicator is one who can manage the crisis effectively by being prepared for it rather than the one catching up with it. After all, managing a crisis is in a way making of a brand - it reflects the core values of integrity, openness and corporate social responsibility that the company stands for. It has a direct return on shareholder value.

# Media Mantra


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*Prompt and strategic action can not only address crisis but also convert negative buzz into positive sentiment in the public mind space.*

**Seema Ahuja**, is currently Vice President & Global Head of Communications at Biocon Limited. She is a multifaceted Corporate Communications & Brand Management expert who has been in Senior Leadership roles in the Pharma & Life Sciences Sector since 2007. During her career of over 25 years, she has played a critical role in reputation management and brand building for various leading public listed companies in the Hospitality, Pharma, Life sciences and Biotech sectors, key ones being Biocon, Ranbaxy, Lupin Pharma and Jubilant Life Sciences.

Recently, she spoke with Shree Lahiri on the healthcare industry, challenges faced, preparing for crises, the future and more...



**How would you evaluate the Healthcare PR opportunity today?**

**Ans:** Healthcare PR is a niche area and its landscape is constantly evolving. While it presents several consumer-centric engagement options for hospitals and diagnostic brands, it poses several challenges for the prescriptions-driven pharma and life sciences sector. In this dynamic and quick-paced sector, organisations need to have a direct connect with the consumers using various digital platforms. But pharma healthcare players are required to engage with consumers within the regulatory framework, which does not allow pharma companies to indulge in any direct promotion of their products. This is where out-of-the-box ideas for engaging with Prescribers, Payers and Patients become very critical.



**Healthcare has faced a number of crises. What do practitioners like yourself do to prepare for potential crises?**

**Ans:** Crisis Management is a critical aspect of reputation management for all brands. For the Life Sciences sector it becomes even more critical as it deals with Life. A recent survey by Forbes Insights revealed that 88% of more than 300 executives, mostly senior executives and board of directors, were focused explicitly on managing reputational risk as a key business challenge.

This is because stakeholders today care more about what an organisation stands for than what it sells. Today, there is higher scrutiny of organisational behaviour and corporate social responsibility than there was at any point of time before. The advent of social media has also exposed the brands to misdirected activism and trolls who are constantly stirring up negative emotion on various channels targeted at tarnishing the reputation of the brands. As a result reputation management today has become a 24X7 imperative.

I can say from my personal experience in handling crisis situations that prompt and strategic action can not only address crisis but also convert negative buzz to positive sentiment in the public mind space.

The top five things that organisations need to do to effectively deal with crises maybe listed as:

- ANTICIPATE RISKS • BE PREPARED • ACT TIMELY
- BE TRANSPARENT & FACTUAL • BE HUMANE





### What are the key challenges faced by the Healthcare and Pharma business today?

**Ans:** The global pharma and healthcare landscape has been witnessing big ticket consolidation aimed at business expansion to offset the huge pressure on sales and margins. The entire ecosystem is grappling with the expiration of patents, spiralling costs of innovation yet depleting research pipelines, increasing government pressure to lower drug prices so that healthcare expenses don't spiral out of the reach of patients in emerging as well the developed markets. The biggest challenge therefore is affordability and access.

Collaborations in the area of discovery and development, manufacturing and commercialisation are the new order aimed at accelerating the pace of innovation and time to market in the run up to address unmet patient needs.



### How does the in-house communication team manage and navigate regulatory issues?

**Ans:** When regulatory issues crop up it is crucial for the organisation to be transparent, specific and straightforward in its communication. We have all seen the huge reputational damage that the Indian pharma sector has undergone due to the onslaught of unfavourable regulatory audits. In the last few years, several Indian pharma companies have received a slew of warnings for failing to meet the US FDA standards after the US regulator increased its scrutiny of local drug makers that have been steadily growing their market share in the US. However, not all of them have been as severe as they have been made to sound.

To address the adverse publicity and help diffuse the situation, the in-house communication team and PR consultancies need to engage proactively with media to correct perceptions and engage in advocacy through industry bodies and patient support groups. It is important to note that the communication teams need to engage with various stakeholders and not just the media to sensitise them on the real issues on a regular basis as lack of communication leads to speculation which is more damaging.



### What would you say is the future of Healthcare PR?

**Ans:** The future of healthcare PR will be data driven and patient centric, enabled by deeper social media penetration. As highly aware

and engaged pool of patients and care-givers demand in-depth healthcare information, it will need to be fulfilled by healthcare providers in a responsible manner.

Big data is going to play a major role and will provide new challenges and opportunities for all communicators. As people continue to move across platforms, sharing and reinforcing healthcare information will be about precision communications. What we will experience is the convergence of the Communications strategies of B2B and B2C healthcare companies.

In the future, healthcare will go from general to personal. The "Internet of Things" will connect devices that can support predictive medicine and products that link a patient's wellness to their lifestyle will go from luxury to necessity.





In today's media-savvy world where Crisis is common place, **are PR professionals equipped enough to deal with reputational crises of organisations?** Two veteran professionals from the business share their views.

**Bad companies are destroyed by crisis, good companies survive them and great companies are improved by them.**  
- **Andy Grove, Former CEO, Intel**

The same holds true for PR professionals as well. The moment a crisis hits an organisation a PR person is best suited to step into action for the simple reason that they are uniquely positioned in their roles to be the bridge between the internal world, mainly comprising of employees, and the external world of customers and media that spreads the message. PR professionals also have all the skill sets needed to work in a crisis mode. From speed of getting people together, to analysing the situation and persuading everyone to align to one course of action.

The next step is a written word, which is always better than a verbal one. A PR professional would have an archive of risk documents and crisis scenarios which can come in handy for working in a crisis. Usually PR professionals would have simulated a similar crisis and worked on risk documents which are whetted by lawyers and in a time of crisis you do not want to be issuing statements that are not legally approved or spend time in recreating the wheel.

Crisis has no boundaries. Conversations move very fast and soon a crisis can lead to an internet mob, where you cannot call the police to stop the mob from protesting. This is the most critical moment when a PR professional has to activate all the key opinion relationships he has been engaging with and orchestrate them to drive positive conversations or neutralise the sentiment in the Internet mob. This is the pinnacle moment in a crisis when a PR person protects his spokespeople and puts a shield around reputation.

A crisis situation demands multitasking and quick action on deadlines - qualities which are core to any PR professional.

**When facing an already difficult crisis, the last thing a company needs is to make it worse through its own communications, or lack thereof.** - **Norman R. Augustine, Former Chairman & CEO, Lockheed Martin**

Effective crisis management needs three critical aspects to work efficiently - interaction, independence and conviction.

Interaction requires a systemic communication channel between the PR professional and the risk management function, and if possible the Board of Directors. This is the most comprehensive mechanism to catch potential crisis in the nub. Currently, communication linkages are restricted to only Marketing or HR functions. It is critical for C-suite executives to understand the context of the crisis, to take corrective measures immediately. This context building happens only through direct interaction with the PR team.

The other bane is legal and operations' unwritten supremacy in deciding the organisation's public posture. PR needs independence in making the case for media trial, keeping in view multiple considerations from the brand, consumer and media perspective. Experience shows that organisational leadership often does not understand that in the absence of adequate internal and external communications, the regular operational response breaks down, impacting the financial and reputational bottom line of the business.

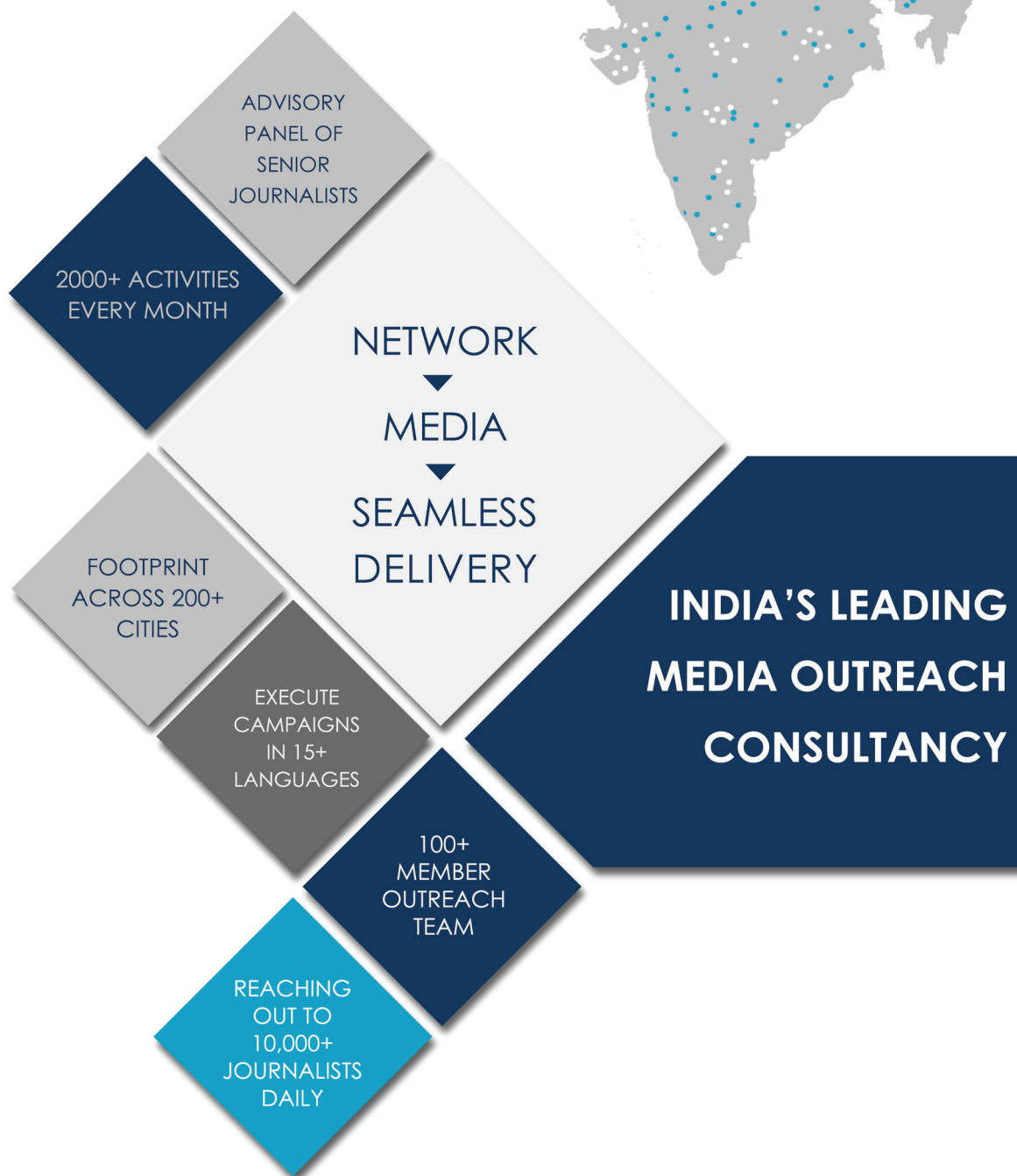
Lastly, unless organisations allow PR teams/professionals to speak transparently with conviction and empathy, even the best of crisis communication plans will be ineffective. Quite a few organisations have been forced to wake up to these needs, especially since the dominance of social media has increased the likelihood of any incident snowballing into a major crisis. However there is still road to be travelled from realisation to full commitment. Till then, PR professionals need to continue their internal advocacy towards making organisations crisis ready.



**Amrit Ahuja** is Managing Director, 2020 MSL. She has been with MSLGROUP for 20 years now and is an experienced senior counselor. She is on the Cannes Lions jury in 2017 for the Innovation category.



**Nitin Thakur** is Director, Brand & Communication, Max Group. With nearly two decades of industry experience, he specialises in building and maintaining corporate reputation.



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*Brands that have shown resilience during crisis have earned respect and restored the faith of their audiences again.*

**Shailaja Rao**, is the Co-founder of Skateboard Media.

It was 9 a.m. on a fine morning in 2012. I was all ready to go to work and, I remember vividly, I was in a chirpy mood that day, maybe because it was that weekend when I was to visit my family. I started my day as usual with my team and the first call I received was a Crisis call from the Communications Head of a real estate brand. The word crisis is synonymous to this sector and one is conditioned to such calls.

For most individuals and brands, the word Crisis would generally instil the feeling of panic and fear. Crisis eludes logic and sets in anxiety that may hamper people from taking rational decisions to ensure sanctity among stakeholders involved. Brands that have shown resilience during crisis have earned respect and restored the faith of their audiences again. One needs to remember that crisis may occur to everyone at some point or another but a true people's brand is the one that takes utmost care in dealing with people.

While there are many guidelines on "how to and what to" when crisis strikes, every situation is different from the other and should be dealt differently. Crisis preparedness is the single most important communication pillar that brands need to be aware of. PREPARE PREPARE & PREPARE: These are three golden words for Crisis management. Brands need to be prepared on how they will deal with the

stakeholders, both internal and external and what will be the communication process. There is a reason why Crisis is more of 'Crisis Communications' than 'Crisis Management'. Communicating at the right time and keeping in mind the sentiments of everyone especially when the media keeps a hawk eye on how the brand deals with Crisis is critical.

Going back to the phone call, I was told we have a situation where the farmers are protesting because this particular real estate brand bought their land from the Government to build a residential apartment at a price much higher than what the farmers were offered. When you work on a crisis like this, you need to study/research about laws and rights of the people protesting. Understanding the sector you are servicing and analysing the crisis situations different brands in that sector have been exposed to over the years is of great help.

A clear communication roadmap needs to be crafted together with the support of the brand securing all loop holes. Both internal & external communication guidelines should be mapped before any communication. In the case mentioned here, we had to understand why the farmers were protesting while the Government had bought this land from them legally and in turn the Brand bought the same from the Government. The issue was the cost at which it was bought by our client. Farmers wanted compensation for the loss of money due to fluctuation in the real estate rates. Seemed like an irrational demand but we had to deal with it.

Being a courageous company, they decided to adopt the villagers to protect their needs. Was that enough? NO! So, what next? We had to protect our rights along with theirs ensuring that the construction work would begin on time. We developed a series of communication statements for the farmers and their leader to make sure that they understood our stand.

Crisis situations take time and patience. One needs to be on ground and hands-on as much as possible to get to the real picture since there could be external elements playing foul to ensure damage to your brand. The truth must prevail and justice must be done no matter how cliché it may sound.

Unfortunately the crisis continued for a while as farmers refused to budge from their demands which resulted in a legal battle with the brand securing a stay order by the courts. At that time, it was important to communicate to the farmers that the brand understood their plight and reassured jobs for them. The matter took time but was dealt with much care and did not generate much negative publicity for the Brand.



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*Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn*  
- Benjamin Franklin



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**Avani Davda**, Managing Director, Godrej Nature's Basket speaks on Building Brand Reputation using Word of Mouth



**Mainak Dhar**, Managing Director, General Mills discusses the Power of Marketing in Transforming Oneself



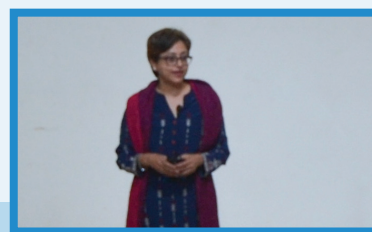
**Aparna Purohit**, President, Jagran Group shares the Adventures of a Woman at Work in Building a Professional Reputation



**Mahesh Chauhan**, Founder, Salt Brand Solutions shares valuable insights on The Magic of Creativity in Building Reputation



**Kanchana TK**, Director General, OPPI discusses the ways of Pharma Communications in an era of Increased Patient Engagement



**Sandhya Vasudevan**, Chief Operating Officer - India, Deutsche Bank talks about why Building a Formidable Corporate Reputation takes Commitment and Courage



**Thank you Partners**



**The Engaged Audience**



# CONCLAVE REPLAY - BANGALORE



**Shradha Sharma**, Founder & CEO, YourStory discusses how to Use Stories to Build Reputation



**CVL Srinivas**, CEO - South Asia, Group M talks about the Role of Communications in Change Management



**Raj Nayak-Shreya Krishnan**, Raj Nayak, CEO, Colors and Shreya Krishnan, Director - Marketing, Communications & CSR, First Advantage discuss the Future of Communications



**Sowmya Iyer**, CEO, Xebec Digital shares How to Smartly use Digital for Earned Media



**Nitin Pai**, Co-founder & Director, The Takshashila Institution gives the audience an Understanding of Public Policy for Reputation Managers



**Jessie Paul**, CEO, Paul Writer discusses Do Reputation Managers understand Marketing



**Thank you Partners**



**The Engaged Audience**



How do we prepare a company for crisis management internally? The answer lies in age old adage - Together we stand, divided we fall.

**- Shubesh Ravindran**



Internal Communications and Employee Engagement is what we talk about and I will come straight to the point!

In a crisis the question is not whether we can handle one with or without employees. The question is also not whether we know how crucial the factor called 'employees' is? The question is - whether all those fighting crisis or given the responsibility to fight crisis understand how crucial the connection between knowing and doing is?

Crisis can come unannounced. The best crisis management is to pre-empt it before it hits and avert it, if possible.

A good employee communication team is perpetually fighting crisis. Knowing the pulse of a company requires alertness; consistent interaction between different stakeholders across hierarchies; systems and tools that can capture the expression of the sentiment at any given point in time.

If that is not happening in a company, I can guarantee that the company is heading straight into a crisis and if a crisis hits anytime it will be found wanting. A whole bunch of companies may be fighting crisis that has manifested itself in the form of widespread distrust in the organisation, tattered culture, lack of direction, attrition, lack of engagement, low motivation levels etc...Unfortunately, this sight of a company's damaged cultural fabric is so common these days that many HR and comms professionals see it as a new normal.

But what do you do if after all these attempts you see a lack of engagement. These are no fixed formulae, but only some guidelines that one can follow:

- Imagine all possibilities, its impact on business and people. Reach out to employees giving the account on what is expected.
- Who is leading? Who is the owner? Clarity and Confidence are crucial. The behaviours will shape reputation of leaders and the company in the time to come.
- Don't hide. Whatever you are sure of, share it with your colleagues, Consistent communication is non-negotiable.
- Involve external experts - why? Not because people internally are in-efficient. Because, a neutral perspective fights a crisis, best.
- Define roles - one of the top leaders should always focus on sharing information with employees.
- Give people respect, express like a human. A crisis is anyway going to damage the environment, don't let people add stories on how they were treated like numbers once they have passed through the storm.

What is crisis without humans? People are the perpetrators, people are the fighters and people are the spectators. Intuition plays a major role in pre-empting and fighting a crisis. Human beings are intuitive beings. And in this world of numbers, we might be missing this simple insight – *together we stand, and divided we fall.*

**Shubesh Ravindran** heads the creative division at BLAQ, a communications firm that specialises in Internal Communications, Brand and Employee Engagement.



An organisation's reputation can be ruined or salvaged by the way it handles its crisis communications.

**- Shree Lahiri**



Today, when the word 'crisis' is mentioned, the Oscar spectacle comes to mind immediately. Early this year, we witnessed what was labeled the biggest mistake in Oscars history. La La Land was wrongly named winner of the Best Picture award, and in a high dramatic moment, the award was handed over to the Moonlight team! And, yes this extraordinary drama played out on stage, was difficult to believe. You could say, the Oscars mix-up gave the widely-watched event a surprise 'twist' finale.

It was definitely a mistake! PwC went into crisis-mode and allegedly got down to crisis talks with the Academy over the "Oscars blunder". Ironically, the PriceWaterhouseCoopers auditors responsible for the biggest fiasco in Oscars history, had brought this up recently, expressing pride in their 83-year-old contract, which they insisted "always" did a good job! So, after the on-stage catastrophe, it was total crisis-mode setting!

On the upside, the 2017 Oscars got their micro-moment. On the downside, it questioned the ceremony's basic competence, which was so far 'perfect' as perfect could be. Until this moment, when great Oscar mistakes were mentioned, we thought of the occasions when wrong films ended up winning - like Crash over Brokeback Mountain in 2006, or Shakespeare in Love over Saving Private Ryan in 1998. But, this unprecedented turn beats all those situations hollow!

Another current example is the Tata crisis. A headline read: India's Tata Sons has sacked its boss, but he still runs several parts of the business. So what now? Soon the story unfolded and we watched the Tata-Mistry boardroom battle as it lingered on, and needless to say, that the two sides put in

place public relations teams to manage the communication in their hour of crisis.

Again, in a surprise move, crisis reared its head in the most unexpected location - Infosys. Cracks seem to have emerged between the founders and board of Infosys over governance issues, according to reports. The debate threw up the issue - will this clash over values, take the route that the Ratan Tata-Cyrus Mistry incident took? Tracking this intense boardroom battle, the advice given by the CEO to Infosys employees really stands out: "Don't get distracted by speculation, focus on work". In an email, he explained how "some speculations and fabrications are clearly designed to tarnish our reputation". A move, surely made to cool any employee discomfort.

An organisation's reputation can be ruined or salvaged by the way it handles its crisis communications. Some tips:

- Be prepared to take responsibility
- Emphasise positive track record of your business
- Look at the situation calmly; avoid vague, impersonal responses
- Manage media relations
- Always have a crisis plan, specially for social media
- Follow-up on the story even after the crisis ends
- Don't jump to conclusions

There are multiple sides to every story, one must be balanced and work with facts, not emotions.

**Shree Lahiri** is Senior Editor at Reputation Today. She has spent several years in the field of communication, being involved in reputation management and public relations.





The purpose of coming out with lists is clear - to make these aspirational and inspirational.

- **Amith Prabhu**



This edition of the magazine is the second of 2017 and the sixth overall. It focuses on Crisis Management and Communication. It also marks the first time anyone has listed the top corporate communication teams in India. We are aware these lists are subjective and therefore tend to be controversial. Our purpose is clear; to make these aspirational and inspirational. The Public Relations community in India is growing and there is a need to focus on the brightest and the best. We have seen several corporate communications directors lead teams and campaigns that one can be proud of. We have also seen several firms celebrate their silver jubilee in the last couple of years. Yet, there are firms that emerge every year that turn out to be unicorns.

We have an entire package in this issue focussed on crisis. And voices of a dozen men and women who have been privy to some of the biggest crises that have faced corporate India in the last couple of years, including the Maggi fiasco and the Tata-Mistry fall-out.

These will seldom get written about from an academic perspective as case studies giving the Public Relations point of view. But we all are aware as to how these battles were fought with high stakes involving the communication machinery on both sides. There are crisis conditions

unfolding in both the Grand Old Parties of the world's largest democracies as well. The Indian National Congress and the Republican Party are seeing their worst times and it will take the sharpest crisis management experts to help them tide over the current situation if at all they are keen to come out of the mess they have chosen to get into.

There are global events that take place annually which every communication professional would do well in saving for and investing time and money to attend. In addition to getting to meet some interesting fellow professionals they also offer a great amount of exposure and learning. The ICCO Summit in Finland and PRovoke in Miami would be great forums to be at. Check out their websites for more information.

There is our own PRAXIS between September 15 and 17, taking place in Jaipur. We hope you have signed up already or will do so today. This year we have three Global CEOs and couple of other global leaders who have already signed up as speakers. There is John Saunders of Fleishman and Fred Cook of Golin.

The Fulcrum Awards taking place soon after PRAXIS is the first awards system in the world of Public Relations to be associated with a Big 4 by virtue of PwC coming on board as a Process Reviewer.

**Amith Prabhu** is the Founding Dean of the School of COmmunication and REputation (SCoRe) - He is also the Founder of the Promise Foundation - the only organisation from India which is a member of the Global Alliance. He can be reached @amithpr on Twitter.

# Reputation TODAY

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Top Corporate Communication Teams

Nominations open 1st March

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Nominations open 1st May

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