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Reputation

TODAY

A magazine for Public Relations and Corporate Communications Professionals

FOCUS

Creativity and Innovation



WHAT INSPIRES OUT-OF-THE-BOX THINKING?

Innovation is all about
change and disruption

INTERVIEWS

Amit Misra

As the media landscape transforms, PR will be better understood and recognised.

Anant Rangaswami

PR consultants should help their clients stay ahead of the game.

Minari Shah

Communications is evolving into a mature interactive medium for messaging.



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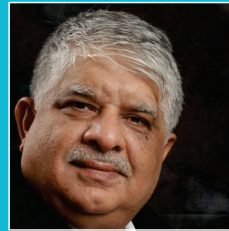
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FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM



Innovation and Creativity are the buzzwords we hear time and again in our world of work. They are sometimes used interchangeably, which is certainly a fallacy. We hope that every professional learns to apply creativity and appreciate innovation as they are important pillars in reputation building.

Every campaign needs to be creative to stand out. But every campaign cannot be innovative. Innovation disrupts, if executed right. Creativity comes from inspired thinking whereas Innovation comes from the urge to create something new and solve a problem. Innovation is more commonly heard of in the world of technology and Creativity is referred to in the world of marketing communications.

We are partnering with First Partners (the youngest PR firm in the country created by veterans) to co-create a communication conclave exclusively for in-house communication professionals. It has been in the works for close to a year and the collaboration has come from shared interests and a mutual passion for excellence.

Well, one of the things we have been researching about as a team, is the crux of Public Relations and to our minds five words come alive. These shorten to create GREAT. And these are linked to the most important aspect of Public Relations. To our minds creativity or innovation in Public Relations is of no consequence unless they pass the GREAT test which means an effort or initiative, or campaign led to one or more of the following -

- **G**oodwill generation
- **R**eputation enhancement
- **E**ngagement creation
- **A**ffinity built
- **T**rust earned

The next task for us is to be innovative in finding ways to measure the how much goodwill was generated or by how many points was reputation enhanced or what level of engagement was created or how much affinity was built or how much trust was earned.

Arriving at a metrics or formula will take a lot of collective thinking. India gave the world zero. If all goes as per plan India may give the world the metrics to measure Reputation which is based on the GREAT component. We would like to hear your thoughts on the above. Write to us with GREAT in the subject line and send your thoughts to team@reputationtoday.in.

In the meanwhile, look out for Manifest – the Reputation Management Retreat in Goa in April and the Influence Now Communications Conclave in Mumbai in May. Enjoy reading this edition of India's only print magazine for the intelligent communicator. This is the ninth edition and we are immensely proud of this offering.



PROFILES OF COURAGE

Over the last eight months, six youngsters from different educational backgrounds and various parts of the country have worked tirelessly towards their commitment of becoming PR professionals. At this moment they have completed five months of focused, practice-based education on fundamentals of Communications, and applied it through two-months internships at some of India's leading PR consultancies. They now begin their final leg of three months, where they get exposure to advanced communications techniques and an opportunity to see how corporate communications teams work as well, after which they will be ready to join PR firms full time. Here are brief snapshots of their professional profiles.

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Ishaan Lahiri

Ishaan is a Bachelor in Arts with honours in Psychology from Ambedkar University, Delhi. After being exposed to film production, content writing and photography, he decided to take the plunge into the world of public relations. He is enthusiastic, patient and a good listener.



@Lahirilshaan

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Julia Joseph

Julia holds a Master's Degree in English Literature, and has worked with The Promise Foundation before deciding to build a career in Public Relations. Her communications and managerial skills make her a good fit for this profession. She likes challenges and strives for excellence in her work.



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Reenal Lobo

Reenal is a Bachelor of Commerce from St. Agnes College, Mangalore. With a background in Finance and a passion for Communications, she decided to combine the both in the field of Public Relations.



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Riya Sarkar

Riya holds a Master's degree in English Literature from University of Calcutta, Kolkata, and is a former national level badminton player. Her love for communication and meeting people drove her towards a career in Public Relations. Her interest lies in sports, music and entertainment.



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Shreya Dubey

Shreya is a Bachelor in Mass Media from Mumbai University. Very curious and open to learning, she likes accepting challenges and accomplishing them efficiently. She considers her love for writing as one of her core strengths.



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Sudha Chachra

Sudha Chachra has a Masters in Industrial/Organisational Psychology. The love to understand consumer behaviour and communication drove her to the journey of Public Relations.



@csudhas16

Blog:sudhachachra.wordpress.com



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REPUTATION TODAY SUPERNIGHT REPLAY



From top left to right

- Simaran Bhasin, Co-founder BRAG
- The Engaged Audience
- The SCoRe Team – Batch of 2018



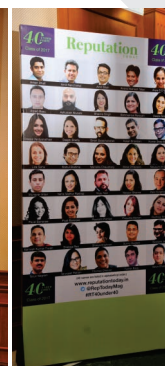
From top right to left

- Lloyd Mathias, Senior Marketing Leader
- The Reputation Today Super Night Gathering
- KS Narahari joins the evening with his wife



From top left to right

- Unveiling the Reputation Today 40 Under Forty Special Issue
- Catching up with friends
- Exchanging notes over drinks



From top right to left

- Pragnya Waklu & Manu Srivastav
- The Reputation Today 40 Under Forty
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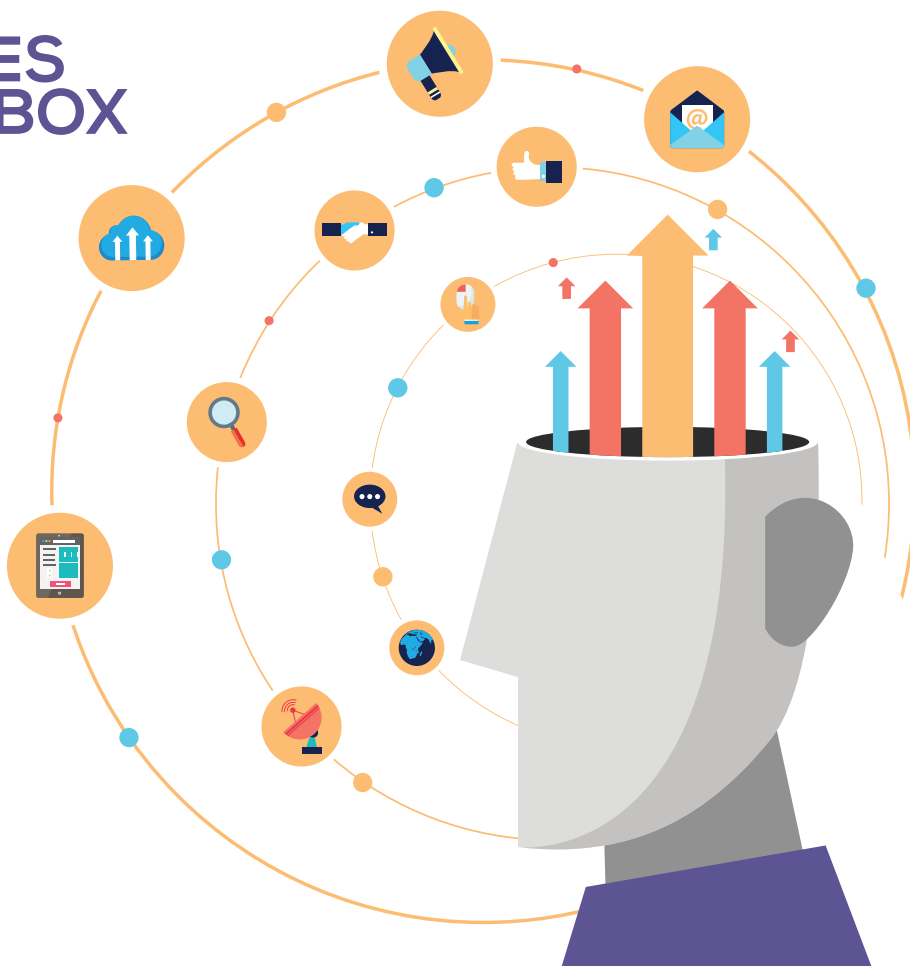


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COVER STORY

WHAT INSPIRES OUT-OF-THE-BOX THINKING?



Building a culture of innovation requires patience and an appetite for risk. Encouraging people to share their ideas openly, making time for brainstorming, short-term job swaps to broaden the team's experiences can be some ways to build a culture of innovation within a organisation.

Shefali Sapra, Director - Corporate & Regulatory Affairs, Danone India



A communications manager must look at the content of a narrative with fresh eyes every time. It is important to acknowledge that what worked for the last story, may not be the best way to tell the next story, or all stories.

Madhavi Jha, Director, Corporate Communications, Honeywell India

We are always in search of the Big Idea, and ideas are exciting. It's out-of-the-box thinking, paving the way to innovation. But innovation, apart from being an eye-stopper, is all about the change brought about by it and the disruption caused.

Why is innovation so important? It's clearly a competitive advantage. Innovations allow organisations to flourish in the long run, moving far ahead of competition. Without innovation, there's no change, and today, we are totally aware that change is the only constant! The need for innovation is imperative today. Something that President Obama saw clearly when he said, "We need to out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world".

Succeeding in Innovation

Curiosity keeps leading us down new paths, said Walt Disney. And new paths lead the way to innovation. So, what is the true meaning of innovation?

"Innovation essentially means staying relevant. It means being able to think of a need before a potential user voices it and finding a solution to meet the need", opines Nandini Chatterjee, Chief Communications Officer, PwC India.

Innovation for its own sake is neither truly creative nor value-adding. In communication, plain marketing logic that delivers the right message, through the right media mix, to the rightly segmented stakeholders often works better. "You need a roadmap for the journey and a strategy that lays out where and how innovation is going to create value for your organisation," says Shefali Sapra, Director - Corporate & Regulatory Affairs, Danone India.



Building a Culture of Innovation

Building a culture of innovation today is all the more important than ever before. Today, as in Lewis Carol's "Through the looking glass", where the Queen shouted "faster" and "faster", we have to run fast every day not in order to move ahead, but simply to survive.

The dynamics of innovation have become crucial for companies today. Not having an appropriate profile as an innovative company can mean losing opportunities or not attracting the right talent. Putting it quite simply, "Culture of innovation is built with openness. With tolerance for mistakes. With encouragement and positive environment. With desire for Kaizen and maturity to accept ideas", says Arun Arora, Chief Communications Officer, Cairn India.

The team should be exposed to different facets of the business, advises Shefali Sapra. A certain amount of risk-taking is inevitable with Innovation; Teams should be encouraged to take risks, even if it means making mistakes and then learning from them.

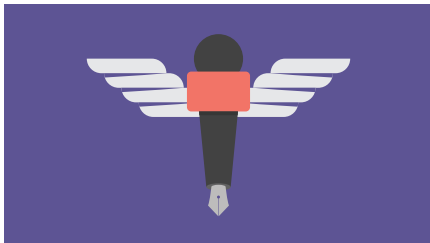
then last in public memory, your story should stand apart in all the noise, adds Madhavi Jha. The phenomenon is like how advertising exploded, and ads now struggle to stand out. In PR, the same explosion of content has happened owing significantly to digital media. Earlier, today's newspaper was tomorrow's fish-wrapper. Now, early morning's tweet is stale by late morning.

Innovation in Communication

Where does innovation in communication happen – in content creation, media relations or crisis management? Quite categorically, it's across the spectrum, points out Madhavi Jha. Business strategy is no longer driven by one mantra. Nor can PR strategy be driven with one thing. The proliferation of media, and proliferation of news consumers and creators alike, mean that content needs to articulate value to the consumer, in a simple, yet fun and engaging way. Media relations will be driven by content that sells, not by influence alone.

Earlier, a PR crisis could be mitigated if you had strong relationships with the media. Now, your stakeholders number millions; most of those relationships are transient and tenuous, often being on social media alone; and every consumer and non-consumer has a voice and a platform to speak at.

It's in content creation, affirms Arun Arora. Media relations – media rounds being replaced by media roundups, data analytics, trends, real time info sharing. Crisis has witnessed preemptive and preventive communication, with better tools to study impact, capture learning to be better prepared for such eventualities. For Shefali Sapra too, it is happening everywhere. "Emergence of technology has paved the way for innovation in communication. The online media landscape is drastically different from the old days of print. Virality and shareability are important benchmarks in communication today. The more creative the content, the more impact it will deliver," shares Shefali Sapra.



Scope of Innovation in Public Relations

Public Relations is more driven by the richness of message and multimedia content rather than by relationships and media investments alone. It needs to go further down that path so the narrative remains credible and interesting to the consumer. So, it's significant, emphasises Madhavi Jha, Director, Corporate Communications, Honeywell India. Innovation in communication is embedded in its DNA; it's like yin and yang, and innovation plays a critical role in making communication relevant to consumers in an engaging manner, points out Shefali Sapra.

Ultimately, PR is largely about story-telling. So, if you need to engage and



The scope of innovation in Public Relations is huge. It begins by working on using lesser text, more graphics, more AVs, direct messaging, bespoke communication after analyzing audience needs and preferences.

Arun Arora,
Chief Communications Officer, Cairn India



Innovation involves creative thinking. The ability to identify a need before someone has voiced it is creative thinking. Finding a practical and smart solution to fulfill this need again requires creativity. I believe Innovation is not always radical changes or disruption. Innovation is anything that solves a problem or creates new value or provides a great customer experience.

Nandini Chatterjee,
Chief Communications Officer, PwC India





Innovation and Creativity

Some people may say creativity has nothing to do with innovation - that innovation is a discipline, implying that creativity is not. Alternatively, creativity is also a discipline and a crucial part of the innovation equation. There is no innovation without creativity. The key metric in both creativity and innovation is value creation.

Innovation is creative thinking, and much more...fundamentally, it goes beyond thinking, to actually implementing innovative ideas, clarifies Arun Arora. Creativity adds to, and augments the message and medium, making it more attractive, engaging and lasting in audience memory, but it must be noted that it should be built on sound marketing rationale, says Madhavi Jha. When we talk about innovation, people often expect radical changes or disruption. Nandini Chatterjee, states that innovation is anything that solves a problem or creates new value or provides a great customer experience.

What is creativity?

We look for creativity in every sphere of life. Can creativity be learned? There is so much focus on creativity currently, that there is a real possibility that we can easily fall into the trap of confusing creativity with effectiveness, observes Pradeep Wadhwa, Vice President, Corporate Communication, ReNew Power who goes on to say, "Not everything that is creative is effective, therefore in my dictionary effectiveness precedes creativity. There is a definitive positive correlation between the two and in today's extremely cluttered marketplace with high media fragmentation and the rise of digital/social, creativity is a must to break through the noise and make an impact."

Within a typical communications set-up, limited resources, working for relatively unknown brands and restricted budgets, it is often seen that creativity comes to the aid of a communications' professional. To manage difficulties or even take on a

challenging goal seamlessly or effortlessly is often the best judge of creativity, notes Swetank Jain, Chief Communications Officer & Chief Customer Officer, Future Group.

Can there be a step-by-step process?

According to Barsha Panda, Director- Communications, APAC, Oracle, creativity can be achieved by focusing on three things:

- *Leading with compelling stories*
- *Developing deep capability to build narratives, experiences and artefacts*
- *Finding ways of taking these stories directly to communities*



Creativity is about achieving the extraordinary out of the ordinary or deriving more results out of less resources.

Swetank Jain, Chief Communications Officer & Chief Customer Officer, Future Group



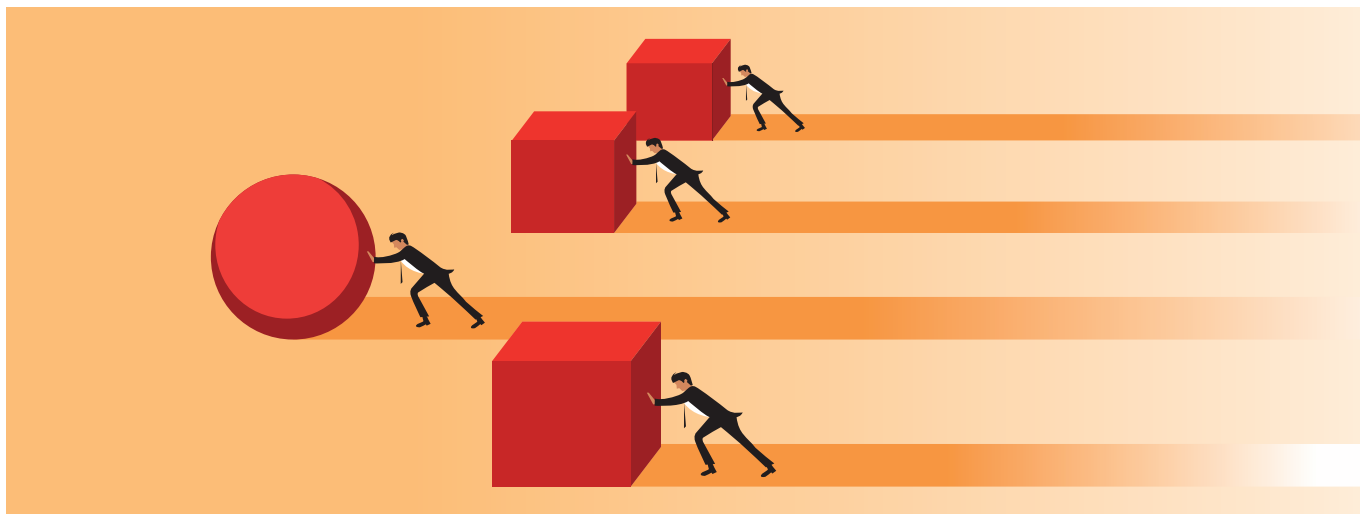
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Barsha Panda, Director - Communications, APAC, Oracle

Hiring the Best Creative Talent

Talent is in short supply, as HR consultants point out. And, for PR firms it's an uphill climb.

One big reason for this is that Public Relations is not seen as a business led by creators of stories. The spotlight is rarely on content creators and the ecosystem of content creation, asserts Barsha Panda. Swetank Jain puts forth his theory: "For a brand or organisation to create an impact through effective

communication, it needs to work on two levels - Wisdom and Energy".

Traditionally, the common practice was to involve a PR firm only in the second leg that involves execution or energy. Companies, who hire PR firms, usually hire them for additional manpower only to execute their PR strategy, even while they pay them for both – wisdom and energy. This is because PR firms are perceived to be good in operations. Concurrently, PR firms themselves, for long, have positioned themselves as a brilliant operations arm, where corporates have reserved the wisdom bit and the role of designing creative strategy for themselves. It is this compartmentalised 'practice and perception' combo by companies and PR firms that has discouraged creative talent to join PR firms, since the 'best creative talent' doesn't see themselves taking on creative work in traditional PR firms. All these make it challenging for PR firms to hire the best creative talent.

In this scenario, the onus for a paradigm shift lies greatly on the company or client. While the change has to start from the organisation's side, PR firms and professionals too need to proactively seek work that involves

wisdom and a creative contribution at the strategy level. The bottomline remains - we need to look at PR firms as Communication Partners instead of hired help. Involving them in the decision-making process will encourage them to deliver greater creative impact on the brand's customers and take more responsibility of the outcome.

Presenting another angle is Pradeep Wadhwa who says, "PR firms traditionally were not known to be creative, hence are not seen as the first choice by the best creative talent. Also even if they are able to hire them, managing and nurturing creative talent requires a different mind-set and culture than what PR firms are used to".

How can PR firms lead in the creative arena?

PR firms are ramping up their role. They are now coming up with unconventional solutions and unique ways of connecting with their audience. They are proving their worth as strategic partners where they also provide creative solutions. There has also been a rise of niche PR firms or even niche segments or departments



Things are changing fast and for the better. Most good PR firms are bringing in good creative talent. PR firms compete with advertising agencies, creative agencies, digital/social focused agencies and boutique firms for talent and business. Their ability to market the creative talent and monetise their investment will be key to retain best talent.

Pradeep Wadhwa, Vice President, Corporate Communication, ReNew Power



within PR consultancies that are actively working on providing creative solutions to the clients, rather than focussing solely on the execution, elaborates Swetank Jain. But, this is just the beginning. There is much more that needs to happen. This includes a greater acceptability and inclusion of PR firms by the clients or corporates in the strategy-building stage.

Some of the PR firms are firmly focused on building their social media strength. In doing that, any smart team will sooner or later reach the conclusion that social media is about content creation and creators. At that point, I find them investing in content developers. On the brand side, we are focusing on the immersion of communications teams into the story-telling exercise, discloses Barsha Panda. For example, with Technology PR, their starting point of story-telling is not where the technical talk ends, but it is at the effort put into understanding the actual context of why this development is a real story.

Innovation and Creativity – The Road Ahead

"The digital medium has taken the world of communication by storm, as it holds great reach and power to impact its audience, even while the conventional media continues to thrive", observes Swetank Jain. While the choice of the right medium is an important component, a lot of emphasis is also being laid on the content that is being conveyed. The type of content that we disseminate to the media or customers is gaining more importance. Though, it is the combination of the right content with the right medium that's going to spell innovation and creativity.

Both clients and consultancies understand the importance of innovation and creativity – the need is established, says Pradeep Wadhwa. We should make sure that in this race, the basics are not compromised (who our stake-holders are, what are they driven by, what are our key messages,

which is the best channel to reach them, how will we measure success) else it will be just art and will not achieve business goals.

Barsha Panda sums it up by saying, "With social media and new technologies redefining what we can do, I think the bar for innovation and creativity keeps going higher across PR and advertising. I am sure we'd love to see and even create some fundamental shifts in storytelling in 2018. And whether such a shift takes place this year or not, it will definitely surprise and delight us in the near future."

The shifts in the changing landscape have ushered in major changes in PR. Is it creativity now that matters more than ever? Or who is more innovative? That actually decides whether you have a lead or not. With pushing competition, diversity dialogues already in sight, the road ahead will be – thinking out-of-the-box! So, what's your Big Idea?



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Richa Chaddha, Actor



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The Chef's Way to a Healthier Life

(L to R) Madhulika Dash, Food & Culture Columnist, Vikas
Seth, Culinary Director, Embassy India and Gresham
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Terrorism Through Other Prisms

Shreya Narayan, Actor, Writer, Brahmachari Jemal,
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Theatre in the Digital Age

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Qissebaazi

Danish Husain, Dastangoi Expert



Qissebaazi

Sattvic, Actor, Theatre Director



Hindi Cinema Nostalgia Quiz

Teams gearing up for the quiz



Winners of the Quiz on Hindi Cinema

A quiz curated by Radha Rajyadaksha, Writer, Editor and hosted by Tara Deshpande, Actor



Registration Team



Runners Up of the Quiz on Hindi Cinema

The Knowledge Factory Team





GURU SPEAK

Today, we need to invest more and more in learning and development of talent.

Amit Misra - CEO, MSL India

Amit Misra, has over two decades of experience in corporate consulting and public affairs advisory to multinational corporations and business conglomerates across India and Asia. Leading MSL India to two consecutive wins as 'Great Place to Work' in 2014 & 2015 and again being certified in 2016, Amit continues to make MSL in India a firm that puts colleagues at the centre to make it a great place for them to work and grow.

RT: Tell us about how you got into Public Relations.

AM: Mostly by accident! To expand on the specifics, I will pen a book someday.

RT: You have an extensive experience in corporate consulting and public affairs. How has the journey been for you?

AM: I would like to describe my journey using just a few adjectives:

- Thrilling
- Satisfying
- Humbling
- Super Fun

RT: Client needs have changed today, and PR consultants have to learn new approaches. How does a PR professional adapt to the changing environment?

AM: Today, you don't have to just accept change but hug it in order to excel. As the speed and nature of communication continues to transform in the digital age, PR professionals across levels, today more than ever, have to keep pace. The onus here lies both on the firm and the individual to invest in learning.

We need to invest in learning and development of talent, for both; providing clients the best strategic counsel and execution as well as to up the quality of talent. And while firms should, it is also the responsibility of professionals today to be proactive in upping their learning curve by being open to working in cross-functional teams and investing in learning courses.

RT: How does MSL stand out with the new approach of Building Influence and Delivering Impact?

AM: Our statement intrinsically reflects our new global purpose of engaging multiple perspectives and holistic thinking. Today, to solve difficult challenges, we are called to engage perspectives from across the echo chambers that exist in our worlds and process those points of view into thinking that respects all. We have restated our brand narrative to clearly describe our business and what we aspire to deliver for our clients – Which is to champion our clients' interests through fearless and insightful campaigns that earn influence and deliver impact.



RT: MSL was a winner in the 'Great Place to Work' survey and also was featured as 'the most preferred choice' for clients and colleagues. What are the things that MSL does differently for its employees?

AM: Talent is the foundation of our business. At MSL our mission is to go beyond being a 'Great Place to Work'; we work towards making the MSL experience more holistic by adding learning and development on top of a culture of fun, respect and equality. Thus, our mission is to make MSL a 'Great Place to Grow for Colleagues'. Some of the initiatives include:

- Ignite – A dynamic and world-class learning platform for colleagues which is brought to life by domain experts
- Volunteering time to our citizenship initiatives
- Ongoing mentoring and development across levels
- MSL Ustad – A concierge service for colleagues to help manage their personal pressures

RT: How are PR campaigns in India different from those in other markets in Asia?

AM: Asia in terms of language, culture, media consumption etc. is the most diverse of all continents. According to me, most campaigns across markets are similar with regards to the conceptualisation, as the basic premise is mainly consistent. The critical difference is reflected in tactics of execution, geographic priorities, local sensitives, tone and tenor of messaging and of course budgets.

RT: What will be the two to three trends in Public Relations that one will witness over the next couple of years?

AM: Firstly, we will see sectors like healthcare, education and organisations dispensing civic amenities make more concerted efforts to leverage public relations to deliver their nuanced messages more effectively and drive behavior change.

Secondly, as technology and social media continues to transform and enhance the communication landscape, technologies like big data and immersive technology will pave way for more targeted and engaged communications; with mobile being at the center of the ecosystem.

RT: What do you think are the qualities that an ideal PR professional should possess or cultivate?

AM: Curiosity, Creativity and Courtesy

RT: Are PR firms in India innovating enough to deliver value to clients?

AM: Cannes over the years and in 2017 especially has lent much needed credibility to our creative ability. That said, there is still so much of great, exceptional work being done that doesn't come into the limelight as often as it should. However, as the media landscape transforms, the value addition that PR brings will be better understood and recognized over the coming time. We just have to be at it!

RT: Tell us about your one favourite PR campaign in India in the last one year and why is it your favourite?

AM: There are many outstanding examples, however, the Vicks **#Touchofcare** campaign definitely stands out. Based on a simple insight, it is storytelling at its best. Fostering an appreciation of unconventional relationships and breaking stereotypes. The powerful online engagement that it successfully achieved is a testimony to the emotional connect that the campaign so deserved.



CASE STUDY

Bringing Dignity into the Lives of Carpenters - Shramdaan Divas



For the Indian adhesives industry, carpenters tend to be among the most important stakeholders owing to their unique role – both as a direct consumer and as an influencer – in the purchase decision. This is why Pidilite Industries (the maker of the Fevicol brand) constantly tries to deepen its ties with carpenters by organising programmes on training/self-development, medical camps, festivals and other social events under the aegis of Fevicol Champions Club (FCC).

Adfactors PR, in conjunction with the client's Corporate Communications team, realised that the programmes – despite the good intent and thoughtfulness – lacked the vital element of bringing dignity and prestige into the lives of carpenters. This was important as the carpenter community was an economically as well as socially backward group that constituted one of the lower rungs in India's caste-ridden societal ladder.

Business Goals

Fevicol had the twin business goal of building closer ties with carpenters by positioning Fevicol as a socially responsible business, and improving the corporate reputation of Pidilite as an organisation that is doing well by doing good.

The consumer behavioural goal was to bring in dignity into the lives of the

carpenters by making the general public aware of their contribution.

We came up with the idea of FCC's member-carpenters donating a day's labour, once in a year, to mend and repair furniture at orphanages, destitute-shelters and old-age homes. Our concept of positioning carpenters as donors stemmed from the conviction that society, which has always attached great respect to acts of philanthropy, will honour the 'dignity of labour' put by the carpenters.

We saw three clear benefits from this campaign:

- The carpenters will earn respect from society
- There will be an increase in self-esteem among the community
- It will provide a much-needed succour to the poor and uncared at shelters that perennially suffered from shortage of funds.

We were convinced that this exercise would restore dignity to carpenters and simultaneously endear Pidilite to this community. Thus, the concept of Shram Daan Divas was born. The foundation day of Pidilite Industries, December 21, was chosen as the date for conducting this annual event.

Campaign Achievements

Our all-India media outreach programme showcasing the

carpenters' efforts led to the following:

Traditional media:

Fevicol received 82 media clips about the Shram Daan Divas initiative. Leading newspapers such as Dainik Jagran, Hindustan, Navbharat Times, Eenadu and Sakshi gave prominent coverage to the event and the unique role played by carpenters. The event generated 30 million opportunities-to-see (OTS).

Social Media outreach:

Twitter: 11.56 million impressions, 2,000-plus tweets, 1,000 Retweets, 287 contributors; Facebook: 7,483 likes (all organic), eight videos and 15 Images; Instagram: 15 posts (images and videos), 313 favourites.

Number of participants at Shram Daan Divas:

42,000 carpenters across 320 cities, including Tier I, Tier II and many Tier III cities.

The beneficiaries:

800 organisations, including government schools with 60,000 children along with old-age homes benefitted from the initiative.

Brand Fevicol, a generic name for adhesives in India for some time now, is now acknowledged for its exceptional and noble initiative of rallying around the socially-disadvantaged carpenters and helping them earn respect, gratitude, and self-esteem.



Aditya Chatterjee, VP – Content Marketing, Adfactors PR, is a communications specialist with a cumulative work experience of 24 years. Over the last four years, he has personally scripted close to 200 award-winning entries at various national and international fora.



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MEDIA SPEAK

The PR business is no longer about press releases and press conferences – it is about being a strategic partner to clients in all their communication goals.

Anant Rangaswami - Editor, Storyboard (CNBC TV18)

Anant Rangaswami, has over 20 years of experience in media and advertising, is a prolific blogger and author of the recently launched "The Elephants In The Room: The future of Advertising in India 2016", which he feels is "focused on the changes that will force advertising in India to change and the people who will lead this change". In this one-to-one interview with Shree Lahiri, he touches upon – how to stay on top of the game, the evolution of PR professionals, what triggers creativity and more...

RT: With your rich experience the advertising and media space, how was the transition to the content and journalism space?

AR: Even when I was in space-selling or in advertising, writing was important to me. It was a different kind of writing; proposals, position papers and the likes. I am not really a 'journalist'; I watch and study advertising and media, two disciplines that are very close to my heart. As a result, I comment on these two disciplines, disciplines that I spent many years working in. So, in a way, there was hardly any 'transition'.

RT: How have you seen the evolution of PR professionals from your days as the Founding Editor of Campaign India to now at Storyboard?

AR: Overall, it's been disappointing and I think that the PR business has become less knowledgeable about their clients, their clients' competition and why the media or a particular media should cover stories related to their clients. Much of this is due to the low focus on training and a poor understanding of what it takes to really 'service' a brand in the PR context. The PR business has grown and so has the need for people with requisite skills. Earlier, the overall (I underline overall) quality of people was better. As the profession and the number of people in the business exploded, the quality of people took a beating.

RT: In 2016, you had joined the Board of Unmetric, the leading brand-focused social media intelligence company. You had said that you would "play a small role in easing a critical part of the marketer's responsibilities – measurement". How has the journey been?

AR: It's a journey that continues. Measurement of audiences, be they in print, TV or digital, is critical to marketers. The better the measurement, the better the allocation of funds and resources to particular media or particular titles. Unmetric is, at heart, an agile company that looks closely at developments in the social media space on a day-to-day business and then trying to anticipate how marketers can benefit from the colossal amount of data that the environment throws up – in a convenient, efficient way. My role stays small: trying to help the management of Unmetric understand changing marketer needs.



RT: What do in-house and consultancy-based professionals in PR need to do differently to stay on top of the game?

AR: Read. Read. Read. Do you know anything about Blockchain and how it can impact the business of your auto client? Your pharma client? Your FMCG client? This is just one example. To truly be a consultant, you need to help your clients stay ahead of their game by advising them on all the developments in the ecosystem that can affect their business positively or negatively. The PR business is no longer about press releases and press conferences – it is about being a strategic partner to clients in all their communication goals.

RT: What are the most innovative PR campaigns you have witnessed in India in the last couple of years?

AR: Honestly, I cannot think of one that is not a paid campaign.

RT: How does Indian Public Relations practice compare with that in the west, especially the US?

AR: It's apples and oranges, not apples and apples. Indian PR firms are not paid well enough to provide the kind of services that their counterparts in the mature markets do. This is a complex challenge (and we see the same in advertising). Clients must learn to see the difference between a PR consultancy that has 10 employees and quotes Rs. 1 lakh as a retainer and the other that has 500 employees and quotes Rs. 10 lakh. The skill sets available in these two are completely different and deserve completely different compensation – but many clients do not understand the difference. The 'good' PR firms must learn to tell their own stories better so that clients can see these differences.

RT: Having been part of the creative business, what in your opinion are triggers for creativity?

AR: There's only one – true consumer insight. This can be based on research, observation and experience, or a combination of all three.

RT: You authored *The Elephant in The Room: The Future of Advertising in India, 2016*. Will we see a similar book on the PR profession?

AR: No. I do not know enough of your profession.



CASE STUDY

Rewriting the script for women with #CrossTheLine



A sport that saw its origins in rural India primarily due to ease of access, kabaddi has always been a popular sport in India. However, since it was a contact sport, it was mainly played by men since women were considered too fragile. Even though some Indian women had broken through this barrier, their efforts to bring kabaddi to the limelight had been in vain. People were simply not interested in watching women play kabaddi ... live.

All this changed when Star Sports decided to popularise the sport of women's kabaddi by creating a league for women only. Star Sports, India's largest sports channel had successfully launched a kabaddi league for men in 2014 and wanted to replicate that success in 2016 with women's kabaddi. But the question was, how would Star Sports encourage viewership of a women-only sport?

Business Goals

Based on the insight that in India women are rapidly crossing the boundaries that have been laid out for them in fields ranging from science to sport, Star Sports created a campaign that became a rallying cry for women everywhere and for the players of women's kabaddi in particular. In kabaddi, to score a point, you need to

cross a white line drawn into the ground. Genesis Burson-Marsteller took this aspect of the game and launched a campaign called #CrossTheLine, which showcased how women had already broken the glass ceiling in industries ranging from science to defence. It was now time for them to take the lead in contact sports.

Realising that the stories of these players were the most powerful way to connect with the audience, Star Sports shone the limelight on their journeys to becoming world-class athletes in this intense sport. It focused on the extraordinary stories of ordinary girls who lived in small towns and had beaten all obstacles to achieve national glory. The focus was to drive viewership for the pioneering offering, which in turn would catalyse participation for the sport.

Star Sports launched the campaign via an evocative video that spoke about women crossing the line across disciplines in India and going beyond societal expectations. The video was promoted through television advertisements and on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Unlike other sports where the players are constantly under public gaze, kabaddi players are not accustomed to public scrutiny in everyday life. Star Sports trained the players to convey their journey in an engaging way via application-based

workshops that focused on role playing. A targeted media strategy was deployed to cover print, broadcast, online and social media to build relatability for all the women players.

Grass-root level engagement programmes helped to create touch points with local budding talent. Star Sports organised state-level and elementary school tournaments to drive curiosity and create engagement for young girls with the sport of kabaddi.

Campaign Achievements

Women's kabaddi reached out to over 90.4 million people via television broadcast on Star Sports and stadiums ran at 85% capacity for each of the matches of the Women's Kabaddi Challenge. Amazingly, just two matches of women's kabaddi surpassed the viewership figures of the UEFA Euro Cup 2016.

The most important impact, however, was how the campaign changed the perception of what is considered appropriate for a woman in India. Girls in India now had a new set of role models in these players. As a young girl said to Abhilasha Mhatre (Captain of a league team and kabaddi player), "When I saw you play kabaddi, I told my mother that even girls can play games like boys and be on TV!"



Dolly Tayal, India Practice Chair, Brands, Sports & Entertainment Practice, Genesis Burson-Marsteller, is a communications specialist with more than a decade of experience of managing multiple clients and projects across diverse industries like Automobiles, Technology, Corporate, Brand and Spiritual.



ONLINE OFFLINE



Sonia Huria

Head - Communications & CSR,
Viacom18

Creativity, the soul of communication

If medium is the body, creativity is the soul of communication. As the ecosystems around us evolve, communication is becoming increasingly dynamic with the 'How' increasingly taking the center-stage from the 'What'. Messages in their inherent nature are unilateral and therefore, the way they are communicated makes them multilateral.

To read the complete article, please visit:

bit.ly/OnlineOfflineSoniaHuria



Chris Lewis

Founder & CEO, LEWIS

Why Creativity Matters in PR

There are rocks in the Aravalli Mountains which are among some of the oldest on earth. It's difficult to believe they were once molten lava extruded from the ground like hot jam. Over the years, these enduring features have been eroded by the daily wind, sun and rain and eventually washed into the Rukmavati River which empties into the Gulf of Kutch and thereafter into the Arabian Sea.

To read the complete article, please visit:

bit.ly/OnlineOfflineChrisLewis

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OPINION



Amit Shah, Senior President & Country Head, Strategy and Marketing & Corporate Communication, YES BANK & Executive Director, YES Global Institute. He is a 'design-thinker' and TEDx speaker with extensive experience in transformational leadership in the financial services and consultancy sectors across the world. Recently recognized as a key social media influencer, he featured among the LinkedIn Power Profiles India 2016.

Innovation in Public Relations

*Challenges of content overload, a 24*7 news cycle, the digital-first culture and an A-team mindset*

At the turn of the century, Public Relations matured from being a postscript communication medium to a strategic tool, focused on exploring psychological and sociological effects of persuasive communication on the target audience.

CXOs and PR professionals today globally acknowledge that a brand's image shaping, positioning, storytelling and overall brand journalism are mainly a function of the organisation's investment in Public Relations. While the power of organic content and need for it is well understood by both, organisations and consumers, owing to explosion of digital media, the unprecedented pace at which content and consumption patterns are changing today, brings with it a unique set of challenges for PR professionals.

Exponential rise in conversations, cross-interaction of digital and physical, multi-variate information sharing

formats & modes and wide dissemination of crowd-sourced information, call for creative problem-solving and data-backed opportunity identification, pivotal to the business of persuasion.

Understanding the Digital - Physical Continuum to Innovate and Respond Faster

Unlimited options of sorts that PR professionals and marketers are presented with today can sometimes send confused messaging or result in clash of resource allocation while executing a project. So, it's imperative for marketers to start with the TG (who may have multiple touch-points) and be clear about the end goal throughout the planning and execution phase. And most importantly, create a culture to understand the evolving technologies and the differences between various media and marketing approaches needed to tackle each one of them.

Bridging the gap, hence, between physical and digital marketing channels and communicating a single message through all channels is essential, but not necessarily easy. More often than not, it is observed that teams go into the campaign mode and in due course, the overall brand and communication strategy takes a back-seat, leaving gaps for communication crisis situation.

This becomes even more important in the Indian context. While Indian consumers are fast adopting digital means of communication, a large part of the populace is still dependent on traditional means of communication like print and TV for mass information.

Relaying the right messages to a populace needs innovation in content and the right balance between digital & physical for resource allocation. Delivering news-worthy content by creating unique story pegs and pre-determining its success by planning the right time & amount of dissemination through all communication channels, A/B testing story formats and delivery channels and ensuring scientific measurement of the strategies applied will lead to development of more innovative tactics for PR professionals to practice and further establish better industry standards.

Most importantly, adhering to the age-old mantra of sticking to simple and honest communication through all channels will ensure that trust is established with the target audience and there's a positive recall for the brand with every interaction.

Creating an A-Team through Peer Learning, Innovation, Evoking Trust

Internal

A common problem that corporate PR teams face is the lack of self-visibility. Some might argue the need for it. The merit of the idea lies in the fact that managing up is hard. While PR professionals aren't the face of brands, they manage Senior Management that represents brands. And, the task of convincing leaders to invest in PR, guiding them through media trainings and persuading them to stick to themes and stories builds a case in itself for PR teams to invest time in building their reputation in the organisation and be seen as influencers.

Innovative PR teams and leaders hence make serious efforts to educate themselves about the organisation and the industry they function in, create a culture of information & knowledge exchange within the communication team and widen their network internally to evoke trust and present themselves as not just enablers of business unit's external communication but also strategic counsel in due course.

External

Relationship building with industry and the media are at the mainstay of PR. An A-Team which is information-rich, has a well-developed network and healthy competition within inspires the team to introduce further innovation and creativity - to engage better with all stakeholders and execute the organisation's communication strategy, effectively. In this age of rapid digital transformations, hurried conversations and information obesity, it is imperative that PR professionals recognise the need to stick to time-tested communication tenets while up-skilling and improvising on techniques, to cut through the noise and resonate suitably with the audience.

*Amit Shah was part of Reputation Today Forty Under 40 - Class of 2017.



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COMMUNICATOR SPEAK

Communications is evolving into a mature interactive medium for messaging across different channels and all aspects of any business.

Minari Shah - Director, Communications, Amazon India

Minari Shah is a seasoned corporate communications professional with an experience of over two decades. As head of corporate communications for Amazon India, finding new ways of storytelling is her forte. She believes that core messaging must be strong and then it will find relevant stories.

Getting into a conversational mode with Shree Lahiri, she discusses the challenges, digital communication, what innovation means for Amazon, creativity in PR and more...

RT: What are the challenges that the business of Public Relations faces today?

MS: The most interesting challenge – and really the exciting part of PR – is how technology is changing everything. The audiences are more fragmented yet less silo-ed (for instance, employees on social media, journalists are customers etc.); the way we create content and reach out to audiences; the overlap between marketing and PR (Who owns branded content/social media handles?) So, the scope for PR is larger than ever before with hardly any business aspect that isn't PR-critical.

RT: How important is the role that reputation management plays to solve a company's business problem(s) today?

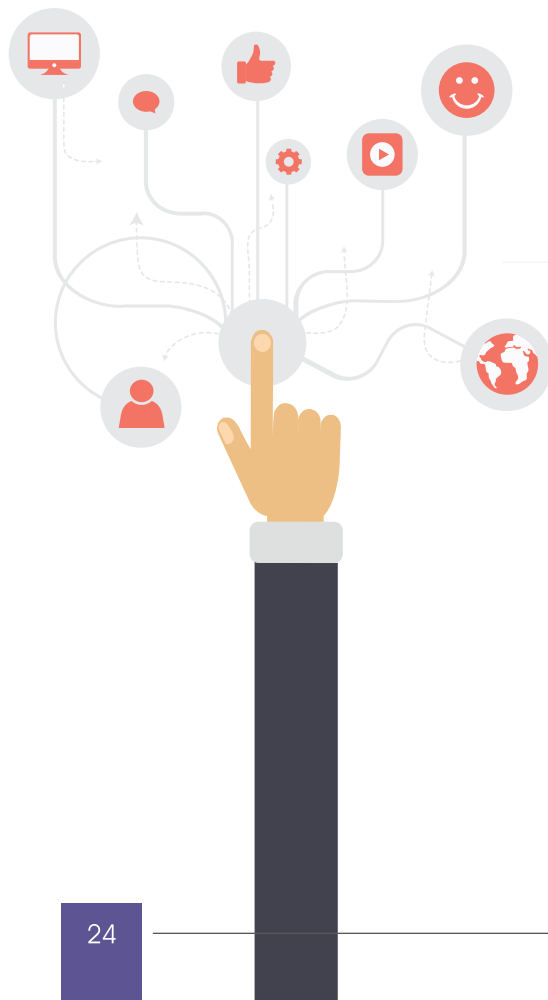
MS: It's at the heart of every business. We have seen company leaders change; we know companies may enter or exit businesses to manage perceptions. For eg., banks reviewing decisions to lend to palm oil companies due to heat from environmental organisations. So not just business problems but business decisions are now viewed through the filter of reputational impact.

RT: What are the innovative activities that Amazon has undertaken that other brands can learn from?

MS: Innovation is at the heart of Amazon. Interestingly, the company believes that it needs to be customer-obsessed. Often in internal discussions the conversation is all about – "why should we do this story? Media might find it interesting but it's of no use to the customer". This perspective is different from the usual PR approach.

There are multiple interesting activities – as a business changing the ecommerce landscape in India, Amazon had to bring tier II and tier III towns into business. PR partnered closely with business to create properties like Chai Cart (where Amazon team literally took a tea-cart to local trading areas, invited small businesses owners to tea and converted them to online selling).

For the launch of Fire TV stick or Echo, we created a living room to show how these products are used. Sometimes a small tactical step has significant impact – we had really interesting invites for our Originals, Inside Edge and Breathe, that created a strong social buzz online before launch. Then we married internal and external communications by inviting the actor Madhavan and others from Breathe cast, for an Amazon "fishbowl"; where they interacted with about 1000 employees living in Chennai.



The event was broadcast across Amazon India offices to tens of thousands of people, generating fantastic online buzz! Recently, we set up an in-house radio in our Fulfilment Centres – so across 200 locations, we have our in-house programming that allows our associates to listen to great music and have quick fun interviews with leaders or colleagues to keep them updated. And as they say at Amazon – it's still Day 1 for us!

RT: Please comment on the innovations that are happening in the communication space.

MS: Communications is evolving into a mature interactive medium for messaging across different channels and all aspects of any business. Communications is no longer a product launch! Smart PR professionals now know that the best story-telling is not just a tactical announcement but a continuing conversation. I am super excited about our platform Amazon Stories that captures all the wonderful ways in which Amazon touches and transforms lives. I see a lot of my colleagues doing very interesting work in the space of how to do influencer PR – though that's fast becoming an over-used term that needs sharper defining. We need to look for innovative ways for effective ROI in PR, how do we measure the impact of our work; in auditing and reporting, in managing teams and talent.

RT: As a senior communicator, what is your observation on the use of creativity in Public Relations?

MS: Creativity is one of those catch-all phrases that can mean nothing or everything. To be honest, I am a little distrustful of the word, especially as it has become a buzzword. I prefer to think of PR as a problem-solver, where you need to get a certain message, a certain positioning articulated for a short or extended period. How do we tell a story that's effective and memorable? How do we build a process that allows consistent business inputs to the PR team and then how do we build a mechanism to use these?

Horses for courses is perhaps a very mundane way to say it but it could mean doing the regular straight forward QA or creating a great emotive video or simply getting customers to participate in an activity. So, let's not let creativity limit us. Creative or not - let's figure ways to solve problems!

RT: What is the secret mantra that you follow in your professional life?

MS: The first is prioritisation and being impactful! Two, I want to understand all aspects of business as much as I can; not just "What's PR-able".

Here is an advice I value a lot – it's not the role, it's how you can enhance it!

RT: Any tips for aspiring Public Relations professionals?

MS: Be immensely curious and interested – in the world and the business; read a lot, across subjects and genres. Be positive and optimistic – a hard-working, can-do attitude sometimes matters more than anything else. And be thoughtful – find data, analyse it, think it through to make decisions rather than simply do something either to follow the herd or to be different.





DEBATE

There is no innovation without creativity. You have to be creative to be innovative. But then, everything that is creative need not be innovative. Catch two professionals here, who present interesting perspectives on this line of thought.

All things innovative are always creative

I agree with the above. Is all innovation really creative? Yes. But is the creativity in innovation relevant? Is it intelligent? Is it needed? Not always.

To truly be deemed an 'innovation', 'it' has to be relevant today. While the effort, intention and courage to innovate have to be applauded, all innovation must be viewed through the lens of market realities and customer expectations. When it meets these expectations, then it is relevant innovation that seeks to simplify life or add a new dimension to our thinking or solve a real issue and not a manufactured one.

In Public Relations while our tools are limited, our intelligence and imagination is boundless. It can be used in several ways to not only get the desired results but exceed it.

I see a lot of creativity being deployed, but the intelligence to call it innovation rests with a select few. A company at any stage has to experiment with it and devote some time to it to stay ahead of the curve. The arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient tomorrow as well.

In today's rapidly changing times, we have to innovate to bring about progress in the business. But it has to be tempered with learning and understanding the challenges and issues faced by the business so that you can creatively innovate to address it. As one of my favorite motivators puts it, *"Innovation is not born from the dream. Innovation is born from the struggle"* – Simon Sinek. What is the struggle that you are trying to address or solve with the innovation and how effectively is it doing the job?

*Tarunjeet Rattan was part of Reputation Today Forty Under 40 - Class of 2017.

All things creative are not necessarily innovative

Creativity and Innovation are often loosely and interchangeably used. There is confusion particularly about the difference between Creativity, Innovation and Invention.

Creativity is the capability of conceiving something original or unusual and Innovation is the implementation of something new. At our workplaces we all indulge in brainstorm meetings and creatively dream up new ideas - that is creativity. There is no innovation until an idea gets implemented. Somebody has to take the risk and deliver something for a creative idea to be turned into an innovation.

During my years at Facebook, we challenged ourselves to think like there was no box. We partnered with our global colleagues to bring to India, Facebook: A place to connect which was an interactive product showcase. This large scale community event served as an opportunity for teams to listen and receive feedback to ensure everyone's product experience is great, regardless of where they connect. This event was pure Innovation which required flawless execution.

There have been innumerable times when one has had creative ideas and due to various risks or challenges is unable to implement them. There are companies and teams who have great ideas but are just unable to follow them through or do not have the capability to execute and hence are unable to innovate.

Creativity and Innovation is not limited to products, it can be extended to communications, even advocacy or you as a brand. My two final cents, Be Creative and follow through beautifully to be Innovative as well.

*Carson Dalton was part of Reputation Today Forty Under 40 - Class of 2016.



Tarunjeet Rattan, Managing Partner, Nucleus PR is a seasoned PR professional with over 18 years of experience in Public Relations, across verticals.



Carson Dalton, Director, Community Relations, Ola has an experience of over a decade leading communications for various Indian and global organizations.





ENGAGING STROKES

It is important to foster an innovative environment within the organisation to not only attract top talent, but to also encourage free-thinking.

Shree Lahiri

Shree Lahiri is Senior Editor at Reputation Today. She has spent over two decades in the field of communication, as a journalist and being involved in reputation management and public relations. She can be reached @shree_la on Twitter.

The lifeline of deep-seated innovations seems to be - going back to the basics. This often means disrupting rules written in the past. No rule is timeless or sacrosanct. With evolving times, we must make way for new rules. The challenge is having the courage to break old rules.

For PR firms, innovation is questioning the rules and re-imagining the very definition of Public Relations itself. Today, we need to do that, to survive in our complex, ever-changing environment.

How can you encourage the strategic risk-taking attitude that leads to innovation? Here are some suggestions – five rules of innovation, so to say, to get you started.

Be ready to disrupt

Be ready to completely revolutionise the way the business works. You may have to step back from old processes and discover new ways. That idea of diving into something that would disrupt not only competition, but the way business is done, is what really separates you as an 'innovator'.

Committing yourself whole-heartedly to the cause is very critical. To innovate, you must be involved whole-hog with blinkers on (sometimes!) - to ward off any opposition.

Anticipate a revolution

To anticipate the disruption (or revolution) that is coming up, it does not mean that you should stick to one idea only. In fact, it is just the opposite - constantly revising innovations can lead to brand success. To truly innovate, one needs to understand not only where the business needs to be today, but also where it needs to be tomorrow.

How do you give your business more steam? Through an intuitive and uncomplicated way, you can make way for an innovation that will ring in a revolution. The market today is continuously demanding, as customers' needs continue to be heard. And anyone doing this, can hit sure-shot success.

Innovation needs a systematic approach and flawless execution

You can, and you must be systematic about innovation. Though creativity may sometimes involve chaos, innovation benefits greatly from clear processes and a good innovation system in place. This means setting the right priorities, and establishing the right rhythm in your organizations, as well as making progress measurable and people accountable. In the end, innovation is an idea turned into reality.

Communicate, communicate – it's all about storytelling

When innovative ideas are in the pipeline, they need to be

communicated and celebrated. We often wait to see what happens before we announce openly. The real learning is in the development phase as that's where the risk-taking happens. This is also an appropriate time to celebrate positive failure (if the idea flops!) and to learn from it. Plus, the innovation is a story by itself – engaging, out-of-the-box storytelling!

Set the company culture

Lastly, setting up a culture of innovation is important. One must foster an innovative environment within the organisation to not only attract top talent, but to also encourage free-thinking.

Reality is that you may find yourself at crossroads – to maintain the atmosphere of the past while attempting to infuse the "new and innovative" culture. By fostering an environment that is open and innovative while simultaneously staying true to the core of the business is the secret to success. Then, you can realize true-blue 'innovation success'.





TAKING PRIDE

The primary difference between Innovation and Creativity is that all things creative need not be innovative, but all innovation comes from creativity.

Amith Prabhu

Amith Prabhu is the Founding Dean of the School of Communication and Reputation (SCoRe). He is also the Founder of Promise Foundation – the only organisation from India which is a member of the Global Alliance.

My oldest memory of being creative was when my parents took me to a beach in Mangalore when I was barely five or six and I began to build a sand castle from scratch using my wildest imagination. The first time I think I got innovative was when I realised the pocket money I got at age 18 was not adequate and I needed to work on an idea to ensure an additional source of income and created a company that curated quizzes. In a small town it was a first and I earned close to Rs 1 lakh conducting over 50 quizzes while completing my graduation.

How many of us remember the first time we were creative or innovative? And mind you the two are very different yet have similarities. The primary difference is that all things creative need not be innovative, but all innovation comes from creativity. As PR professionals our goal should be to create as many campaigns as possible and the benchmark we set for ourselves should be that every campaign should either be creative or innovative to be able to deliver results.

In the last four years, as a social entrepreneur, I have had to improvise constantly as I build a niche to support the Indian PR community. And these improvisations have been innovative in their own way. The PRAXIS model about which I will be talking at the World PR Forum in Oslo in April is one such innovation. There have been dozens of PR conferences but when we as a bunch of volunteers decided to create a different kind of conference we rewrote the rules that have stood the test of time. We did not repeat several key ingredients that most conferences thrive on – notably speakers, venues and the performing artists. We also approached sponsorship, registrations and the organisation from an entirely new dimension. For those of you who have not witnessed this, please sign up to attend the seventh edition in Hyderabad. For the others who have been there and done that, we look forward to welcoming you again and learn about the Essence of Storytelling. Mark your calendar for the last weekend of September.

Good storytelling hinges on being creative or innovative or both. A simple tale can be told in a creative way to make it more interesting. We are all supposed to be good storytellers, as stories lead to more goodwill, enhanced reputation, bigger engagement, increased affinity and greater trust. You may have already read about this in the editorial on the opening page. We are hoping to build GREAT into a world-famous metric to measure Public Relations.

In the meanwhile, there is a crisis of talent looming large that needs a solid solution. The School of Communication & Reputation- SCoRe (www.scoreindia.org) is one solution. If you have a friend, relative, neighbour, colleague who has the potential to be a storyteller and achieve GREATness, direct them to SCoRe and help make a difference to someone's career. We are doing our bit to build a centre of learning that we will all be proud of. As always, I look forward to hearing from you and the best way to reach me is on Twitter at [@amithpr](https://twitter.com/amithpr).



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THE LEELA AMBIENCE, GURUGRAM**

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