

SANJIV KATARIA'S VIEWS ON DEVELOPING CORPORATE REPUTATION

Corporate image and reputation are strategic to an organisation. It is not a one-off or an adhoc set of actions that lead up to building and creating strategies for developing a corporate image.

Reputation of an organisation lies in the core products and services it offers...

A company's reputation does add to the value of the product or service. However, it is the quality and value of the product or service that adds or diminishes a company's reputation in the first place. The core of an organisation's reputation lies in the fact that the company has solid core products and services that it offers to its customers.

NIIT's vision sets pace for corporate reputation...

The endeavour at NIIT is to sustain the organisation's reputation according to the vision that was created in 1985. The vision says, "*We will ensure our profitability, long term growth and financial stability through the process of delivering the best, being seen as the best and being the best*". A team of 70 people in Bombay created the vision. This is the strategic document as far as NIIT's corporate reputation is concerned. This implies (a) that our products have to be right, (b) that our service has to be right (c) that we have to deliver the best. Having done that, we move on to the next step of being seen as the best and then finally being the best.

The corporate culture at NIIT...

One of the things we have been doing as an organisation annually over the last five years is a '*blue sky vision*', where top 200 managers of the company across the world get together and create for themselves and their own businesses, the goals and the new technologies they would like to capture.

Realising the human potential of the team at NIIT...

At NIIT, we believe the organisation can be successful only when the organisation enables people to become successful. We created a culture that was extremely open, with open access to senior management. Almost ten years ago, we instituted two very interesting teams called the President's Club and the Managing Director's Quality Club. The process of nomination to the President's Club is through peer nomination in terms of their creativity. We also have a very strong team culture and have made sure that the human potential of the team gets realised by offering people responsibilities much ahead of time. *Customerism*, a term that we have coined, has to do with creating a very meticulous and zero-defect execution of whatever we do, whatever the scope of the programme being undertaken.

Some community initiatives at NIIT...

Among our community initiatives, we have created for spastics a programme called 'I write and I learn', which received the best technological award in 1998. Apart from this, the other initiatives undertaken by NIIT include the creation of 'Learning Management Systems'.

What is important is having a good product and service portfolio garnished with strong technologies and technology-led products, leveraging people effectively, creating a win-win relationship with your alliances. This is something, which will give you an edge that will not get stunted no matter what blips or highs you have with your customer relationships.

COMMENTS BY PARTICIPANTS

Shell's effort in protecting corporate reputation

In 1996, Shell decided that it needed to change its image. For years Shell was perceived as arrogant, uncommunicative and a company that did not share information. This got the company into a lot of trouble. Two events - Brent Spa and issues in Nigeria triggered a desire among management to change our communication strategy. The first step was to communicate a lot more internally with the aim of getting everyone within Shell to think pro-Shell as there were many different points of view in a company located in 135 countries and with 100,000 employees worldwide. An external agency conducted a research based on which we decided on a series of communication strategies. This has resulted in a positive transformation both internally and externally about the perception of Shell and what it does subsequently. The success of communicating has been now engraved in our company policy.

Time spent with interfacing with the media, in building corporate reputation of Pfizer?

At Pfizer we have been media shy, possibly based on history. Something went wrong not once but on a couple of occasions. Two very senior persons were misquoted completely out of context. The result was disastrous. The knee jerk reaction that stayed with us for years was - no more media. We have now of course adopted a healthy dialogue with journalists on the beat, not with an aim to give them news but to adopt a level of communication, to be leveraged occasionally.

Pfizer is one of the world's leading research-based pharmaceutical companies which has been strengthened with the takeover of Warner Lambert. We spend about \$5 billion on research alone. In our 50 years in India, we have been happy to look at ourselves as a leading research-based company, till we were shaken out of our stupor by an ORG report a couple of years ago. The study found that doctors believed that many Indian companies are more research-based than we are merely because they introduce newer products. Pfizer, Glaxo and Smithkline Beecham are not really research-based as they bring fewer products to India.

We realised that we were way off in terms of our self-image and what market perception was.

Today, we are in the continuous dialogue with doctors on what Pfizer's research is all about. A number of events, communications and road shows have been organised to communicate to the doctors. Through a simplistic though impressive presentation, we are trying to reposition our selves with some amount of success.

(Excerpted from the presentation made by Sanjiv Katari, VP, NIIT Ltd., at PR Pundit's workshop – Pillars of Corporate Reputation, held in Mumbai on March 29, 2000)