

YOGESH DEASIA'S VIEWS ON EVALUATING PR PERFORMANCE

Among the top five companies HLL has consistently been able to maintain leadership position. But a number of companies who are not seen in the news very often have a reasonably steady score too. On the other hand there are few companies who are seen in the news every now and then and yet have scores that are not going up at all. So when you get into the clipping business, the quality and effectiveness are two different things. It is not the quantity that counts. Thus, great coverage doesn't always mean a great message.

When you're the leader, what is required is a fairly high degree of consistency in the communications effort in order to be perceived in a positive light, as well as continue to hold your position.

Take the example of ABB, a highly respected and leading company in Europe. There were years when they had squeezing bottom lines. At a large press conference of about 200 people, the company explained the areas where they had gone wrong, what remedial measures were being undertaken, and how the company was planning to change the current situation. As a result, there was tremendous faith in the management quality and the headline that followed in the Financial Times read, "*ABB gets ready for tough days ahead*". So, being perceived in a positive light is very important. There are no standard parameters for perception as each person has a different way of looking at you.

If you issue a press note to about 30 publications, check to see how many cover it out without a telephone call from your office. And then check how many cover it after a call – this means that with a persuasive effort, you could get an additional score. If you keep measuring this regularly, then you'll automatically be able to pin point your strong and weak spots.

Very often in organisations there are more than one spokesperson and journalists sometimes take advantage of it. If you define a spokesperson and co-ordinate your communication effort, everything that you want to do in your PR evaluation will get reasonably organised.

We talk a lot of evaluation, but few companies spend money on research. Therefore, you end up making a lot of effort, but lose the opportunity to correct what is wrong.

...what gets measured gets done...

In essence, if we look at PR evaluation we should look at the following points:

- ❑ What are the specific goals and/or the marketing communication programme? Can these be stated in quantitative or measurable fashion? (e.g. to double the number of inquiries received or to enhance brand/product or corporate image?)
- ❑ Who are the spokespersons for the organisation during the communications efforts?
- ❑ What are the principal themes, concepts and messages that the organisation was interested in disseminating?
- ❑ Who were the principal target audience groups?
- ❑ Which specific channels of communications were used and/or deemed most important to use in disseminating the messages? (e.g. the media, word-of-mouth, direct mail, specific events?)
- ❑ What is the desired output and/or outcome of the PR effort? For some reason, if those particular results were not met, what alternative outputs and /or outcomes would the organisation be willing to accept?
- ❑ Who are the organisation's principal competitors? Who are their spokespersons? What are their key themes, concepts and messages? Who are their key target audience groups? What channels are most frequently used?
- ❑ What information is already available to the organisation that can be used by those carrying out the evaluation research?
- ❑ What is the timeline for the PR evaluation research efforts? What are the budgetary parameters and/or limitations for the assignment? Do priorities have to be set?
- ❑ Who will be the ultimate recipients of the research findings?
- ❑ How will the information collected be used by the organisation that is commissioning the research?

(Excerpted from the presentation made by Yogesh Desai, President Corporate Relations, Reliance Industries Limited, at PR Pundit's workshop – The Contemporary Portfolio, held in Mumbai on March 17, 1999)