

The three things that are changing Corporate Communications as a discipline, on the road to 2010

Corporate Communications is one of those by-concepts of open market economy to which, the then liberalized India fascinatingly responded, and incorporated it in the nomenclature of the corporate functioning and setting up of a separate department. Indicatively, the department - Corporate Communication - eventually either became a media relations and advertising agency coordination cell, enjoying proximity to the CEO or Chairman of the company. Or in smaller organizations, a misnomer for business development and customer relations department. The discipline Corporate Communication cannot be understood in Indian parlance without considering it as a vital component of any progressive organization, understanding its role, area of work and its effectiveness.

Therefore, as a discipline, it has to still dawn in India. This is as true for our local organizations big or small - as it is true for multinationals (barring some) for whom the corporate communications office in India either sources reports from PR and Public Affairs agencies - or implements the sacrosanct one-size-fits-all communication policies devised at New York or Seattle for the entire world. India, as an economy, society and as a market, is experiencing a rapid transitional phase. India is one of those 'markets' where some basics will never change. And for doing business here, one has to follow the rules written by it for that time. Corporate Communications can take and record the pulsation in the environment and resonate the values of the organization to the environment. The role of Corporate Communications as a department or function area in an organization is increasingly transcending towards the discipline for which it came to existence. I find that there are many things that are making the fancy department of Corporate Communication into realizing its original role and potential in a society and market. At an organizational level, the challenges which are emerging are making corporates to realize its importance; while at the functional level, Corporate Communications is expanding its realm and penetrating deeper to act as vital component of doing business. At the same time in India and the rest of the world, it is also setting the definition, in

line with what a common man means by 'communication'. Thereby eliminating at one end unsupportable board room and academic claims for its capability and utility; and on the other end coming out of 1970's -1980's PRO time wrap where its best function was organizing office parties/ picnics and travel boarding and lodging for senior executives of the company. Corporate Communications has earned its 'place at the table' by delivering value to the business.

The environmental macro and function-wise micro trends, each along with its multiple variables, are leading communications into a defined state. At the global level, there are many things that are instrumental in shaping the discipline of Corporate Communications. But in my perspective, the changes that are important for India are those, which are happening geographically within India or those global ones that are of business relevance to India as a corporate powerhouse.

Emerging challenges due to emerging markets:

•Change in Techo-socio-economic conditions of India

The drastic reduction in the cost of technology and its induction in the very thought of the fundamental development of the nation - which has made technological advancements reach in many ways and to an extent the last mile of unsearched India. With this dramatic change, the penetration and availability of information has increased while the cost is going down day by day. In other words, 'Kar lo dunia muthi mein' is really happening. This is rapidly bringing new tides on the social crust and fueling economy in a unique way. The success stories are pacing from metros to tier 2 and 3 tier cities and are sighting the villages also with 50 to 200 households only. Adding to an old Indian saying that in India 'kos kos pe badle paani, char kos pe baani' (the water changes every mile and the tongue every four miles), I would say that even the perception parameter quotient sees significant changes at every twelve miles. Reaching till that last mile requires a rethinking on the communication style, vehicle and tools.



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