

Creativity - The Key to Success in PR

In the marketing arena, the words “Creativity” and the “Big Idea” immediately bring to mind Advertising people working on a new campaign. Creativity, which means producing something that is new, original or different, has so far been synonymous with Advertising, in which young people with the creative ideas make it “Big”.

On the other hand Public Relations, a more recently evolved discipline of Communications has been associated with dull, lengthy Press Conferences and Releases and smooth talking executives trying to get journalists to write about their clients. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In the changing world of business, where consumers have a choice of hundreds of brands in each product category, companies need to establish differentiators that give their brands an unique appeal with consumers. PR plays an important role in building Brand Equity and enhancing Corporate Image through credible third party communication. The impact of a front-page article in a business daily or discussion on primetime TV can be tremendous. But what can make it get there?

For a story to be published, it must have news value and reach the right journalist at the right time. An average editor gets hundreds of releases each day and has just a few seconds to decide whether each release is useful to him.

The news media - print and electronic, are inundated with information from their journalists, news agencies, special correspondents, freelance writers, companies and PR consultancies. Much of this news can appear only on certain pages, columns or on special days. This results in much of the material received from PR sources being discarded.

This is where a well thought out PR strategy, with an unique attention-getting idea plays a crucial role. Having seen the PR industry evolve over the past several years, one has seen that most outstanding campaigns result from creative thinking and an innovative idea.

Let me illustrate with a few examples.

1. Launch of Godrej I-space Kids Furniture:

In November 2001, Godrej & Boyce Mfg. Co. Ltd. was planning to launch Godrej I-space - an unique integrated furniture unit for children with personalized space to work, enjoy and grow happily. The product was small enough to fit into the corner of a room, yet large enough to encompass a child’s whole world. The challenges were – branded furniture was a new concept; the client was not convinced about the results PR could deliver; and had a very small budget.

Keeping all these in mind, the strategy for I-Space was:

- To launch it at a McDonald's Play area - (a location that kids frequent and love), by leveraging the Godrej Family's Celebrity value.

Leg 1

For the first time we involved the Godrej family's kids to create a 'Godrej Families with Kids' photo-opportunity to interest the Bombay Times in Front Page impactful exposure, to reach our target audience.

Leg 2

After getting the exclusive front-page exposure under the masthead in Bombay Times, we disseminated a Press Release highlighting the product features with an interesting picture of the product being used, in key markets nationally.

This short PR campaign resulted in Front Page Exposure under the Masthead of Bombay Times, product launch stories and features across the country and an overwhelming response to the product.

Return on Investment

93 exposures in consumer and business print and electronic media resulted in a readership of 34 million all within four weeks.

The company also got orders well above target.

2. Procter & Gamble & Sony TV's Education Initiative "Shiksha – Secure your Child's Future"

Background: According to the latest IRS (Indian Readership Survey), only 10% adults in urban India are graduates and approximately 25% children do not pursue studies after completing HSC / SSC.

Also the Pathfinder's study in 2002 conducted among married Indian women indicated that 80% of the respondents said that they would prefer to invest in their child's education rather than save money for her marriage.

"Shiksha": With the above background, P&G thought of an initiative that would help drive sales of their products, while simultaneously contributing to the cause of Education, to which their key target consumers gave a lot of importance. P&G thus launched "Shiksha-Secure Your Child's Future" with select television channels – Sony Tv (North , West, East, Karnataka), Jaya TV (Chennai), Asianet (Kochi) and Maa TV (Hyderabad), across India, by linking it to sales of large packs of its brands – Ariel, Tide, Head and Shoulders, Pantene, Whisper and Vicks. All packs of the Companies products carried a scratch sticker. A few lucky numbers were announced on select programmes each day on the TV channels and consumers with packs with the winning number could participate and win prizes. Under this promotion, purchase of a P&G product could entitle a mother to win full graduation fees, or next

years tuition fees or sponsorship of educational material, CD ROMs, Computers etc, for her child. Everyday, Sony announced Rs. 2,25,000 worth of prizes for a period of 45 days. The prize could be gifted as well (even if you didn't have a child of your own)

Communication Objectives: The objective was to create awareness about “Shiksha” the special initiative on Education. We also needed to appeal to the mother’s emotion about her child’s education and future, thereby getting her to buy P&G products.

The way we did this was:

Phase I

Organized Launch Press Conference in Mumbai with the presence and endorsement of a leading educationist – the former Vice-Chancellor of Mumbai University . Her spontaneous and credible association lent tremendous weight to the campaign, provided an impactful photo-opportunity and got media to write large pieces about the initiative to create interest among mothers. The event in Mumbai was followed with a national Press Release.

Phase II

Winner Prize Presentation Ceremonies in local markets

We organized Prize Presentation Ceremonies in local markets to leverage early Shiksha winners through media with the aim of increasing consumer participation.

We got the Brand Ambassadors of Shiksha i.e. actresses from the TV Serials P&G had tied up with, to present the prize money to winning mothers and their children. Local Media found the stories and photo-opportunities interesting and covered these events in an impactful way. This in turn encouraged more consumers to buy P&G products and participate in Shiksha.

Results: The PR campaign resulted in 350 Exposures in consumer and business print and electronic media resulting in readership of 97 Million across metros and small towns, critical to P&G’s business growth.

Return on Investment: There was an overwhelming response to the promotion. Today ‘*Shiksha*’ is known and remembered as P&G’s educational initiative in the media and by consumers, and not just as a consumer promotion.

On the international front too, the success of brands like Microsoft Windows 95, Red Bull, Body Shop, Harry Porter, Zara, Google and Starbucks, can largely be attributed to the enormous media exposure generated for each of them by innovative and sustained PR Campaigns.

Building creativity into PR campaigns brings rich rewards. Journalists are also more receptive to such material as it holds more interest for their readers and viewers. Creative

ideas have long lasting impact with target groups and are more memorable. They are able to break clutter and get better positions and in the long run, such campaigns give a much better return on investment to companies.

Thus the three I's – Interest, Impact & Investment, brought together by one big creative idea make for WOW delivery and success in PR.

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