

SPEAKING HER MIND

VEENA GIDWANI, CEO OF MADISON PUBLIC RELATIONS TELLS PRACHI MODI ABOUT HOW SHE MANAGES TO STAY ON TOP



Whatever she does, she does to the best of her ability. Be it working on various creative strategies for her clients, chalking out growth plans for her department, motivating and giving creative ideas to her employees or setting targets for her team to follow, Veena Gidwani is a great boss to have. Not easily satisfied by the laurels and labels that she has won, Veena is a perfectionist to the core and a thorough professional too. Flickering with prescient plans for her company's future, this media professional believes in giving her best to whatever she does.

Heading the department

Spearheading Madison Public Relations, a part of Madison Communications, as its Chief Executive Officer since the last six years, this Aquarian has managed to build a very responsible team and charted out some very effective communication strategies for her clients. Ever since her appointment as CEO, the company has seen an upsurge in their clientele. Ask her how she managed that and she explains, "There are three reasons for this growth. First are the ideas behind the creative strategies that we have implemented for our clients which have worked very well for them in the market place. Second is that we have built up a fabulous team of people at various levels. Hence we have a rich knowledge base combined with experience in servicing clients

effectively. The third is that we have concentrated strongly in bringing in new clients and therefore more business."

Aiming at achieving more aggressive growth, meeting targets and providing value addition to clients, Veena's responsibilities as a CEO are never-ending. For the year 2004-2005 Veena Gidwani was also appointed the president of 'The Public Relations Consultants Association of India'. (PRCAI aims to provide an institutional structure and focuses on the PR industry). Tell us a bit about the experience of being elected the president of such a credible association? "It was nice. I think that it is vital that more people get involved with the issues that concern their industry for it to improve. Thus, if senior people collectively get together and address common problems, incorporate proper policies and also recommend solutions, they could really make a difference in the work environment," confides Veena.

Future of the industry

With the PR industry still in a stage of infancy, there's a lot to be done and witnessed before some important structural changes take place. Having said that, how far behind are Indian PR companies from the international ones? "I don't think that we are that far. I am happy to share with you that some of the campaigns that we have created here, have won awards in international forums

too. For some of our clients who are launching their products in several markets simultaneously, our campaigns have proved to deliver the best results. We are coming up with some very interesting ideas and innovative systems in India. I think we need to improve ourselves on the evaluation techniques that are being used to change the effectiveness of Public Relations. And slowly, that too is happening," points out Veena.

Shifting gears towards more professionalism and innovation, Public Relations has become very important in today's times. Everyone, from politicians to film stars to industrialists and multinational companies, understands the importance of PR. So much so, that even several NGO's depend on PR for disseminating messages and effective communication to the masses. They feel that this will help them get more funds and resources. "Initially, it was a lot of ad talk. Nobody really planned PR. If companies really needed to plan or communicate something, they would just send a press release or ask their ad-agencies to do something for them. Infact, companies with high advertising budgets thought that they could ask their ad agencies to do a little PR for them without charging them extra money. But in the last five years, more and more companies are realising the benefits of 'Planned PR' and how it is helping them



With part of her team



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and all their stockholders," points out the CEO. However, the key factor ensuring steady growth and development of this industry is qualified and trained communicators who prove to be an asset to this century's mass communication needs.

Going back in time

Born in Bangalore and brought up in Mumbai, Veena speaks fluent Sindhi and can also write the language albeit in Devnagiri script. Fiercely independent, intelligent and very charming, this Sindhi's ancestors hailed from Karachi in



Pakistan. Reacting to the state of forgotten Sindhi culture across the world, Veena replies, "I think that all Sindhi families must make an extra effort to get their children acquainted with their culture. We have a very rich tradition. Our music and literature is very ancient and unique. We must take our children to *Gurdwaras* and read our holy scriptures like the 'Guru Granth Sahib' to them so that they know about our history and learn to respect their heritage."

Calling herself a communicator, media was not the career of her choice. "I wanted to be a Doctor then, but

during those days one had to go to remote villages for internships and my parents thought that I was too fragile to take up a strenuous profession like that. Hence, I ended up Graduating in Commerce from Sydneham College, with Business Management as my major. I must say that I thoroughly enjoyed the subjects I was learning and also found them very fascinating. Even today, I am very

MAYBE IN FUTURE SOMETIME, WHEN I HAVE MORE TIME I WOULD LOVE TO DO SOMETHING FOR CANCER PATIENTS

passionate about being a media person. No regrets whatsoever!" says Veena who is also a trained classical singer. So, what are the most important responsibilities of being a media person? "I think the key responsibility is to behave and conduct all your interactions, whether it's with clients or with the media, with integrity and responsibility. I think that's very important because both will then have confidence in you and that enables effective communication," feels she.

Matters that Matter

Amidst all this frenzy, how does Veena manage to make time for her personal life? "Time Management is the key and every night I like to take stock of what I have done during the day and what I have lined up for the following morning. This helps me prioritise. Also, if one is a little more organised, a lot of unnecessary stress can be avoided," feels this PR lady. With some very interesting and important clients in her kitty, Veena's future plans include further expansion, moving the business into newer areas, and providing yet better services to their already long list of clients. Some of them include Qantas Airways, Crompton Greaves, Dr. Reddy's laboratories, Blue Star, Blue Star InfoTech, JK Helene Curtis, Unichem Laboratories, London Stock Exchange and Siemens.

An avid bridge player, Veena finds cooking very relaxing and therapeutic and it helps her try and invent new recipes. Five years down the line, she sees herself spending more time with her family and devoting less time to work. "I think I would love to travel and see new places and countries. There is a lot that one has not got the time to do, like visiting interesting places, meeting people of different cultures and giving back something to the society," opines Veena. Having won the 'Indira Super Achiever Award' in 2003 which is aimed at recognising professional talent with passion for success and determination to excel, along with many other industry awards, this tireless lady goes on to add that Cancer is a cause very close to her heart and that in the future she would love to help in that area in any way that she can.

A very hardworking and an enterprising Sindhi, Veena has done her community proud and ends the interview with a message for the Sindhi women all over the world by saying "Today women have made progress in nearly every sphere of life. However, all of us together should attempt to not lose touch with our roots and try and keep our culture alive."

A woman of substance, isn't she? We at The Sindhian are proud of her and wish her the best for the future.