



Dear all,

As I sit down to put down my thoughts for this column, it occurs to me that we are soon going to be celebrating India's 60th Independence Day -

something that should make all of us proud. Though, we still need to address many critical issues, as a country we have made considerable progress in the past six decades, the economy has been on a roll for the past few years continuing to maintain our rich cultural and religious diversity. All this has been possible due to the pragmatism and forward-looking decisions taken by a few visionary people.

India's overall growth in key sectors has given a spurt to businesses like ours, which today have become a must-have service for corporates, government, NGOs, individuals etc. The last decade has seen the Public Relations business evolving into a key management function that contributes substantially to building corporate equity, something we all feel proud about. However, increased competition and a rapidly changing media and technology environment make Out-of-the-Box Thinking an absolute necessity for Big Bang results. At Madison, we try and create an environment that encourages Creative thinking for ideas that break through the clutter.

Looking ahead with huge optimism for both India and the PR Industry.

Happy Independence Day!!

CEO, Madison PR

HOT & HAPPENING

Fastrack "Style Check" with John Abraham

Fastrack Eyegear is a leading youth fashion brand in India and was launched in 1998 as a sub-brand of Titan. It entered the market, which was saturated with International designer labels, and soon carved a niche for itself with designs that were refreshingly different, casual, chic, eclectic, fun and with prices that would not burn a hole in the customer's pockets. Fastrack chose John Abraham as the Brand Ambassador because of his stylish and youthful attitude which gels perfectly with the brand. Fastrack Eyegear wanted to do a multi-city customer-involvement activity.

A two-tier activity was conceptualized where consumers had to take part in a simple contest called "Style Trials", which took place at leading malls in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore. The walk-ins at the mall had to pose with a cutout of John wearing the best of Fastrack Eyegear.



Amongst thousands of entries, five best photographs would be selected on the basis of style and attitude and would win a chance to meet John.

To make people aware about "Fastrack Style Trials" and getting them to come to the activity venue a press release was disseminated a week before the event.

In the second leg, a theme-based evening was created, where the five winners across Mumbai, Delhi

and Bangalore put up a dance performance each for John on songs from his movies. Using the "Fastrack Style Check" event, we introduced the new summer '07 collection of Eyegear. John also shared his style tips and talked about the new collection. John was also asked to select a Fastrack Eyegear product and gift it to each winner. Media and a few distributors were invited for the event, which finally resulted into huge electronic coverage and good photo-led print exposure.

Simeran Bhasin, Marketing Manager, Fastrack: "This event was very successful for us as it created a lot of excitement among our consumers, with the help of Madison PR we could generate the desired exposure."

Shefali Mehta, Senior Account Executive, Madison PR: "The event was an innovative marketing initiative as it allowed customers the chance to interact with Fastrack Brand Ambassador, John Abraham. The special dance performances by the winners on Bollywood hits helped garner electronic coverage and project Fastrack as a stylish and youthful brand."

A Giant Steps in India - The AOL India Launch

In 2007, America Online (AOL), the Internet arm of media giant Time Warner, kickstarted its India operations.

With the Indian portal AOL.in leading the route into Asia, this USD 7.9 billion company wanted to make a powerful statement about the importance of India to the Internet industry.

Madison PR was entrusted to launch the India portal - Asia's flagship destination.

Portals are not new and the list of brands - known, unknown and hugely advertised, seems to be endless and growing.

While AOL is an established entity in international markets as the company that took America online, the challenge was to create

awareness and the starting point was ground zero.

A two-pronged approach was adopted for the launch of AOL India portal.



First, the Agency leveraged top executive presence to establish AOL's leadership position via corporate messages through business media.

Later, to catapult the news to a broader audience, a press conference was organized in Bangalore targeting top-tier mainline, technology, business and general interest media.

Accurate messaging and strategic tapping of networks led to a splash and a big bang announcement with a great introduction to the

AOL story.

In addition to corporate messages, Madison secured rave reviews on the portal's exciting offerings.

Coverage & reviews came from varied print and electronic media, including Aaj Tak, DD News, Zee Business, Business Today and Business India, The Times of India and Hindustan Times, amongst others.

When prestigious media use descriptors such as "the company that has one of the world's largest communities" the messaging could not have been more accurate.

Anand Baskaran, Communication Manager, AOL: "Madison PR played an important role in launching our India-specific portal."



Kais Rahimtulla
General Manager
Mumbai

A smart and witty manager, Kais is a true mascot of Madison PR, highlighting values of the company. A father to three beautiful children, Kais has a vigilant and keen eye on the stock exchange. He enjoys spending time listening to blues and 70's rock and on weekends, he networks with an international group of experts on scriptures from God. Ask him about his philosophy in life and he says, "I don't have one, I don't need one. I already have God's laws and instructions' telling me exactly what life is all about and how I should lead my life".



Fiero Fernandes
Account Executive
Mumbai

Animated, Creative and Style conscious - three words that best describe this one-of-a-kind individual.

A youngster with an 'out-of-school' playboy look, he is definitely a charmer among the women. Loves to party, watch movies and read books. He believes in being a pessimist - If it doesn't work, you can smile and say, "I told you so!" And if it does work, you'll be pleasantly surprised. Capricornian in the true sense, he aspires to prove his mettle in PR. But if it were not PR, he would be assisting in the creative storyboards for Japanese animated movies.



Steven Pereira
Account Executive
Mumbai

'Living for the moment' is the mantra that keeps him ticking. A fun loving and generous MICA'n, Steven is a resourceful PR professional who is passionate about applying

business principles to the practice of Public Relations. Being with close friends, competing in multiplayer computer games and cycling is what keeps him busy over weekends. "If you have the guts, challenge me to a game of Counter-Strike", he quips.



On a lighter note...



The Magic of PR in the uncertain world of Politics

The growing importance of Public Relations doesn't end with leading corporate houses or brands. Leading industrialists today have used this powerful and credible method of communications in the political world as well. They have either entered politics themselves or provided funds to various political parties to get maximum benefits helping their business.

It all started in the mid 1990s, where politics was transformed for most of the politicians. When the then Election Commissioner, T. N. Seshan took charge, public and politicians along with political parties realized that credible 'IMAGE' had become a very important factor in politics. Conveying messages to voters, creating emotional bonding with leaders, loyalty towards the party, winning voter's hearts, increasing the vote bank, etc. were the key factors, which were undertaken for a good PR campaign.



Today, PR is the most important factor for building the "Brand Image" of politicians and political parties. Big national parties like Congress, BJP and regional parties like BSP, Akali Dal have used or are using the services of PR professionals or companies.

Local news papers and TV channels have become very important in creating the 'Image of Leaders'. Just to give you a quick example of how politicians use PR agencies.

PR agencies, first of all, organize a press conference for politicians targeting reporters, stringers, correspondents and photographers from every part of the region or area. They make sure that credible and positive news related to the leaders or the party they represent appears on a regular basis on many types of events like inauguration, agitation, padyatra, demonstration, meeting public, etc.

In small towns and semi-urban areas, people love to watch local TV channels. During election times, these PR agencies engage main local channels for featuring news daily for durations of as low as 3-4 minutes to a maximum of an hour airing general news on the politicians or their parties. Local and national newspapers still have big credibility among readers.

Besides that, PR agencies organize road shows, welcome events on daily basis (during election time) and weekly basis to create local news. At the time of crisis (negative incident), agencies manage to handle the crisis so that not a single news goes to public next day and vice versa. However, if the news is related to the opposite party, they make sure it gets publicised.

The recent success story of good use of PR in politics would be the case of Mayawati in UP. This groundbreaking revolution called Public Relations is surely making a world of difference in the world of politics!

World Speak

"Public relations in India is, in some instances, highly sophisticated in the way it is practiced. As a democracy, India has provided an environment for the development of public opinion and that is the very basis of public relations. As India's business communities expand on a global basis, the practice of public relations will follow."

Harold Burson
Founder Chairman
Burson Marsteller

"I think the future is really in digital PR. There will be a stage when all information will have become digital. You can take the example of the US. The media model is changing; today everything is being migrated onto the Internet. I think there are enormous opportunities for public relations through this. The question is how to tell the story today, when a picture says a thousand words whereas a video says a million words."

Pam Edstrom
Executive Vice President and Partner
Waggener Edstrom Worldwide (WE)