

FRAMING THE DEBATE, FRAMING THE BRAND

It is increasingly important for organisations to frame their brands in terms of the key issues of our times, and thereby make their position clear to all

by Guido Berens and Mignon van Halderen

Corporate branding typically involves the management of mental associations that organisational leaders want important audiences to hold about the organisation. Managing such mental associations, however, is becoming more complicated, given that companies are increasingly confronted with sensitive societal issues such as climate change, human rights in developing countries, and consumer health. In these circumstances, companies are increasingly compelled to explain to stakeholders what their brand stands for when it comes to important societal issues. Shell, for instance, clearly started to realise this during the Brent Spar crisis in 1996. During this crisis, Greenpeace occupied one of the company's oil platforms to plead against Shell's decision to sink the aged, off-shore oil platform to the bottom of the North Sea. By physically occupying the oil platform and making astute use of emotional appeals via the media, Greenpeace managed to control society's perceptions about Shell. Because the company had been silent for so long with regards to its stance on important societal issues, shaping perceptions about Shell was a relatively easy job for Greenpeace. The crisis was a moment of truth for Shell's top management: the company needed to become more voluble about who it is and its role vis-à-vis society. Besides Shell, many other companies have come to realise the



importance of openly explaining the company behind the brand, instead of letting the external environment define who they are. For example, pharmaceutical companies understand that stakeholders expect them to join the global debate on rising medicinal costs and to articulate their position on this issue. Car manufacturers know that they can no longer refrain from taking a stance on climate change, or on the problem of increasing traffic density in highly populated cities. And fashion firms are increasingly compelled to have strong standpoints, values and codes of conduct when it comes to the production of their clothes in sweatshops. Companies like these have started to put a lot of effort into connecting their brand to key societal issues. Until recently, dealing with societal issues was mainly

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Zurich May 16 | June 6 | September 12 |
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Brussels June 30-July 1 | Los Angeles
July 18-28 | Berlin September 15-16

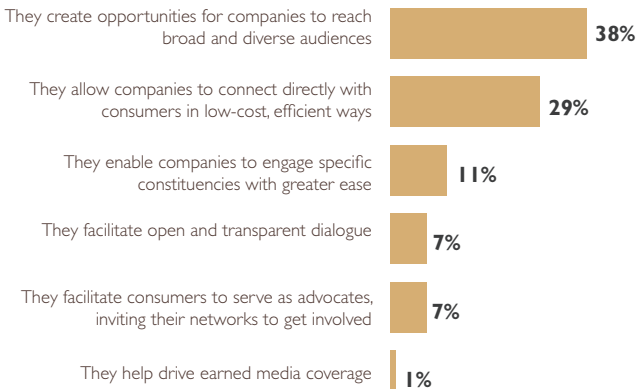
Individual meetings are held throughout
Europe.

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FACTS & FIGURES

Far from being just another media buzzword, “crowdsourcing” can be a legitimate part of your social media strategy on corporate social responsibility (CSR). So claims a noteworthy survey by Weber Shandwick, who state that “Crowdsourcing is not the next ‘big thing’, it’s happening now”. To back up their case, they surveyed over 200 Fortune 2000 corporate executives responsible for communicating their companies’ CSR programmes. An impressive 44 per cent have used crowdsourcing – asking customers to share ideas and contribute to the decision making process on how to tackle issues. Of these, 95 per cent found it benefited their company. Overall, 83 per cent see the potential in this approach. On a broader note, seven in 10 executives say social media has been used to communicate their CSR, and six in 10 have agreed that it has had a positive impact on the quality of their communications. The greatest perceived value of using

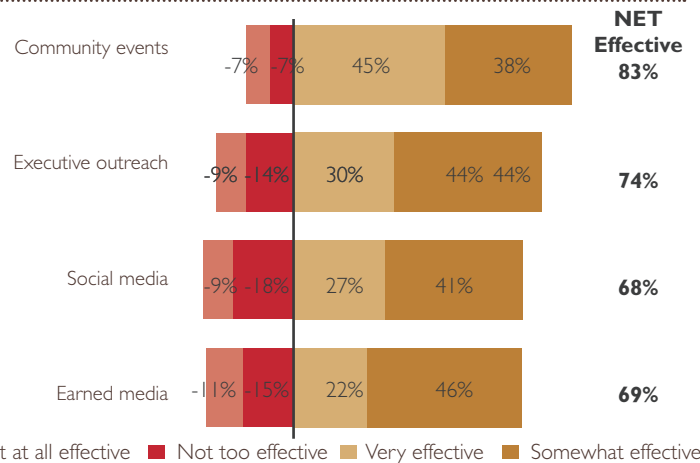
Primary value of social media in CSR Efforts



social media tools as part of the CSR communications is that they enlarge and diversify the scope of potential audiences (below left), closely followed by their cost-efficient properties. The survey also argues for the importance of integrated communications, including social media, in driving awareness of CSR. The survey asked respondents to look at a list of ways organisations communicate and say how effective they were in raising awareness about CSR – social media earned 71 per cent net efficiency (below right). It earned 68 per cent in when the same question was asked regarding driving engagement in CSR. This report, then, seems to suggest that CSR could be the field in which the most creative approaches to communications are developed. *Taken from Weber Shandwick/KRC Research, Crowdsourcing and Social Media in CSR: A Survey of Business Executives.*

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Driving awareness of CSR



COMMENTARY

Killer cucumbers not so deadly after all

Germany’s response to a deadly – and mysterious – outbreak of e-coli has been heavily criticised. As of last weekend, the grim toll stands at 39 deaths and over 3,517 sick, 839 of those with life-threatening kidney diseases. Exacerbating the gravity of the situation are the mixed messages, beginning with a lag time of almost a week between the first confirmed cases and when the reports reached the Robert Koch Institute, Germany’s centre for disease control and prevention. As if to make up for lost time, health authorities were quick to incorrectly blame imported Spanish cucumbers as the source of the outbreak, thereby unleashing a domino effect of European consumers falling over themselves to avoid Spanish produce. Spanish Agriculture Minister Rosa Aguilar expressed his government’s disappointment, calling on Germany “to provide, without any delay and distractions, the necessary information of its investigation” (note the use of “delay and distraction”, two quivering arrows of distrust and suspicion accusing the German government of calculated evasiveness). Anger is not only confined to foreign markets: according to the results of a sur-



vey published in the magazine Stern, about 44 per cent of the German public believe there were too many warnings and 21 percent felt they didn’t have enough information. However, in the midst of the chaos, some voices in the German flank have stood firm behind their communications strategy. Hamburg state health minister Cornelia Pruefer-Storck defended the decision to link the outbreak to Spanish cucumbers, saying “It would have been irresponsible with this number of ill people to keep quiet about a well-grounded suspicion”. She added, “Protecting people’s lives is more important than economic interests.” As a line of defence, that, at least, is an unarguable position.

Newsletter Editors
Neil Cranswick,
Dafydd Phillips

Graphics
Melanie Schröder

Publishers
Rudolf Hetzel,
Torben Werner

Send your Personnel News updates to
personnel@communication-director.eu



PERSONNEL

ERICSSON 



Helena Norrman
(SVP, Communications)

Institution: Ericsson

Start: May 23



Sweden: *Norrman leads communications at Ericsson*

HELENA NORRMAN is the new senior vice president, head of group function communications at telecommunications firm Ericsson. She was most recently responsible for communications strategy, operations planning and CEO support. She joins Ericsson's executive leadership team, replacing Henry Sténson, who leaves the company on December 31 after more than nine years to become a partner with Brunswick in Stockholm.



ZURICH



Angel Serna
(Global Head, Corporate
Communications)

Institution: Zurich Start: July 01



Switzerland: *Serna replaces Goad at Zurich*

Zurich Financial Services Group have announced the appointment of ANGEL SERNA as global head of corporate communications. On July 1, he will succeed Pierre Goad who, as reported earlier, will jointly lead communications at HSBC with Charles Naylor of Credit Suisse. In his new role, Serna will be responsible for Zurich's communications function reporting to CEO Martin Senn. Serna joined Zurich in 2006 as head of media relations.


TRELLEBORG



Patrik Romberg
(SVP Corporate
Communications)

Institution: Trelleborg Start: Oct 01



Sweden: *Romberg to take on new role in October*

PATRIK ROMBERG has been appointed the new senior vice president corporate communications at global industrial group Trelleborg. He will succeed Viktoria Bergman, who leaves on September 30. Romberg has been with Trelleborg since 2006 and is currently responsible for a product area at Trelleborg Engineered Systems. Prior to that, he was HR manager at Trelleborg Engineered Systems.

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EVENTS



30.06 – 01.07.2011 *European Communication Summit*

Top communicators from across Europe gather for the communications event of the year. A packed programme features high-level speakers and engaging workshops and seminars.

► EACD, The Square, Brussels

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28.06.2011 *1st Annual Corporate Social Responsibility Forum*

Under the headline, "CSR as a Bridge between Business & Society", this forum will highlight the interaction among government, corporations and NGOs in the area of CSR. It will also debate the latest critical issues, trends and developments in CSR.

► Capital Link, Caravel Hotel, Athens

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05.07.2011 *Social Media Strategy 2011*

This event will focus on developing your digital strategy to meet business objectives. It will also address the ongoing challenge of getting an ROI measure on social media initiatives, as well as issues around ownership, integration and content strategy.

► Brand Republic, Dexter House, London

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06.07.2011 *International History of PR*

At this conference, 30 speakers from 17 countries will speak on themes such as professional & practice, history & events, Proto-PR and theories of PR. The conference will also feature a Meet the Editors panel composed of editors of leading academic PR journals.

► Bournemouth University, UK

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