

SEVEN RULES FOR GLOBAL SUCCESS

BUILDING SUCCESSFUL GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGNS

Public relations is a relationship-based business and those relationships have traditionally been locally grounded – with journalists, community leaders, activists, policymakers and influencers. As a result PR professionals have tended to think and act locally, even inside multinational corporations and global PR agencies.

This has begun to change – quickly and dramatically. It is being driven by the seismic shift in the communications and business environment. Business is now truly global – even small businesses can easily and profitably outsource their call centers to India while finding customers in China.

The changes in the communications environment have been even more dramatic. The advent of the Internet and the strange and growing online world of blogs, wikkis, chat rooms and the rest have led to not only ‘always-on’ 24-hour global communications, but also the advent of global conversations.

These are often conversations about a corporation among a global community of stakeholders that don’t always include the corporation and that the corporation can’t control or even influence.

Community Branding

At Ogilvy, we have dubbed this phenomenon ‘Community Branding,’ and it is the single biggest communications challenge our global clients face.

Coca Cola is dealing with this phenomenon now as a single activist sitting in California with a five-figure budget and a laptop is organizing protests against Coke across India and product boycotts on American college campuses. Not only has this campaign had an impact on Coke’s operations in India, it made front-page news in the U.S. edition of the Wall Street Journal – a dramatic example of how communications issues are no longer confined by geography.

So how do communicators succeed in this new global world order? It starts with adopting a new mindset. Yes, local relationships still matter, but thinking and acting globally are now essential. The fact that actions in one part of the world can have an immediate impact on corporate reputation across the globe must be uppermost in the minds of global communicators.

What follows are seven rules for developing and implementing successful global communications campaigns. These are the product of difficult lessons learned from successes as well as failures. They’re not foolproof, but they do provide a good framework for diving into the new world of global communications.



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continued

1. Set Strategy at the Center.

One of the biggest challenges of global communications is ensuring consistency of strategy, messaging and positioning from one market to the next. The temptation is great (and natural) for local communicators to decide that only they understand what will work in their market and for them to pursue a local strategy. This is a recipe for a patchwork strategy – which is to say no strategy at all.

When Lou Gerstner took over at IBM, he immediately recognized the fractured nature of IBM's communications and quickly centralized the communications strategy. The result was the development of e-business and a dramatic turnaround of the company.

2. Execute Locally.

A central strategy, however, is only as good as the local execution. Despite the growing global nature of communications, there is no substitute for on-the-ground relationships with the local media and community. An all too frequent mistake is sending communicators from the center to oversee local implementation. This leads often to resentment, and almost always to executions that misfire because of a lack of understanding of the local market.

3. You're only as strong as your weakest link.

A truism yes, but Rules 1&2 dictate that if you have a problem in an individual market, it will become a problem globally. In practice, this means it is imperative to have not only strong, senior strategists at the center, but best-in-class communicators on the ground in local markets.

4. Over communicate.

In concept, global communications campaigns sound like exciting, even glamorous undertakings. In practice, they are difficult and messy affairs that require constant communication within the team to succeed.

For our global engagement with DuPont, we have four internal Ogilvy calls per week – one for the global account leadership and one for each of the three regions. In addition, we utilize a variety of online tools, including a sophisticated extranet that both the Ogilvy and DuPont teams can access.

5. There is no getting around time zones.

For all of the wonders of technology, New York and Beijing are still 12 hours apart. This means that while relying on an extranet is critical, you still have to be prepared for late nights and early mornings. I still shudder at the memory of a client in Jakarta calling me at 3:00a.m. in Washington, D.C. quite upset that the press packets hadn't yet arrived for the press conference about to begin. We solved the problem but were quite bleary-eyed the rest of the day.

SEVEN RULES FOR GLOBAL SUCCESS**continued****6. Be a global citizen – get on that plane.**

There is no substitute for meeting colleagues and clients face-to-face on a regular basis. Yes, it can be expensive, but it's an investment that will pay major dividends in terms of better coordination, consistency of effort and a stronger team.

7. It's the future.

Global communications is here to stay. Those who embrace it and work hard to learn to succeed will be at the vanguard of the next great transformation of the communications discipline. Those who continue to think and act only locally will be left by the wayside. So dive in and good luck.

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