

INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS IN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

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Summary: The development of digital language has caused a profound transformation of human society. Even though we can now perceive only the first stages of this transformation, we can already observe the extent in which computer networks have substantially encouraged (and helped) human interaction all over the world. Nowadays, millions of people spend a significant part of their free time surfing “cyber space.”

Internet has become a true “informational highway”, assuring a big capacity of data transmission, flexibility, decentralizing and interactivity. Sites and weblogs are now a part of everyday life, offering a large range of information, everything from public information up to personal thoughts; there’s more than enough room for everyone.

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1. The Blog, an innovation that offers a means of expression for everyone

A weblog is an internet site, respecting a structure of content defined by the counter chronological order of the time and date in which information is posted on the front page. The progress of this particular domain has made it accessible to the large public and the use of such a software based on the web-navigator is now a common aspect of blogging. The purpose of blogs varies, from personal diaries to weapons of political campaigning, media programs and a large number of companies and civil organizations.

Furthermore, they also vary depending on the author- they can reflect the work of only one person or that of a whole community. Many blogs allow visitors to post their own comments and thus create a whole community of readers build around the blog.

In 1995, when internet became accessible to the public, enthusiastic predictions were being made on the first publisher, envisaging written and video daily exchange of information, thoughts and ideas related to everyday subjects. Even though some early users of the internet have explored this possibility, their vision has never been fully fulfilled until now. Building a site and updating it daily implies a big amount of work and professionalism. Lately, this vision has been developed thanks to blogs and wikis, that have started competing the traditional approach.

There are blogs who register up to 75.000 visitors monthly, several times more than a local newspaper or weeklies. If in the summer of 2006, the number of Romanian blogs was an estimated 12.000-14.000, now it reaches 30.000. New ones are born by the hour: their creators are normal people, courageous enough to share their thoughts and feelings on the internet and thus gain popularity.

2. Blogging- a statistical analysis

Even from the beginning, blogs have fulfilled a double function: on the one hand they are on-line diaries, on the other hand they represent an efficient means of communication. Up to 2004, blogging was an activity created for a particular segment of internet users. There existed approximately 5 million users divided into specific fields of discussion: animals, business, technology etc.

During the 2004 presidential elections in the USA, blogs started to attract more and more the attention of citizens. The more information related to candidates and the public’s personal opinion was being posted in blogs, the more journalists took interest in them. The first stage of the Euroblog study was finalized on the 30th November 2006, an ample and complex research analyzing blogs. Between the 5th and 30th November, information envisaging to the impact of blogs on communication and public relations in Europe was

collected, so that results could be published at the beginning of 2007, in the form of a study useful not only to academic but also to professional communities.

This represents the first major official research, the first truly exhaustive study, based on specific instruments not only on empirical methods. It clearly indicates that the biggest problem of PR (public relations) specialists from 33 European countries is the incapacity of exercising a total control over the communication process between the public and organizations. 40%(percent) of them have declared that they do not know how to include blogs in their company's business strategies and only 10% have complained of the amount of time required to regularly update blogs.

There have also existed surprises when considering benefices and the motivation for existing blogs and near-future projects. The first and most important reason is the occasion of being considered acquainted to the latest technologies and also fashionable. Anyone who thought that snobbism is only an individual movement was obviously wrong. It appears to be flourishing among many European PR specialists. Surprisingly, only 7% have declared that blogs are useful in order to receive feed-back.

Euroblog 2006 has provided a real image of the European PR industry. It indicated the existence of a Europe divided between two movements: that of a minority of enthusiastic specialists disposed to (prone to) new medias and the full use of the blogs potential, and that (by no means negligible) of specialists skeptic regarding the potential of new medias and too caught up in their daily routine to look forward to all that future brings.

The boom of all kinds of blogs and the permanently increasing number of users that chose to be more than consumers and become information generators, demonstrates that our society is changing. Via blogs, consumers share their opinion on brands, companies and social problems- some of these comments are positive but many more are those that offer negative feedback from the citizen on purchased products and civic problems.

The advantage of blogs opposed to usual web pages is that they are updated daily, thus reaching the top of search engines results. A study of the market shows that, as far as credibility is concerned, blog chronics are rated third after those of found in sites and newspapers. Furthermore, market studies, the monitoringizing of civil messages and of brands will become less expensive and it will become easier to spot new trends.

Due to the fact that the „blogoshere ” is characterized by communities of persons sharing the same interests, the target becomes easily identifiable and rapidly reached. Casing aside the “hooking speech” and the obsolete character of web pages, adopting a certain dynamics of discourse, novelties and sincerity, public institutions, companies and their transparency will arouse the public's interest through blog interaction.

3. Message- citizen interaction

In some aspects, brands resemble humans: they have personality, a particular way of expression and a set of values. The interaction between brands and people can be generally compared to human interaction in what concerns loyalty, trust, long or short term involvement and opinion expression. Thus, the traditional approach (through the unilateral perspective it offered) did not leave any room to consumer feedback.

Interactive advertising can take many shapes: small or ample events, conferences, special offers, interactive games etc. Interaction represents the safest approach to helping consumers overpass cynicism and become tolerant towards the message of a brand or of a handout.

Citizens can reject a certain brand for a period of time, especially in public places where others share their views and critical opinions, or be convinced to buy and use a line of products, despite remorse, all due to convincing (intelligent) advertising or to family influence. The civic or political perspective contributes in the same way to shaping individual opinions and convictions.

Blogging determines advertising agencies to overpass their unilateral marketing strategy. New generations of branding will include in their marketing strategies elements as audience rating and the effective communication. Thus are born innovative elements, new departments and blog administrators specialized in communicating with the new market segment of “bloggers”.

A blog administrator does not sell, but builds his own reputation, that of the company which turns him into the leader of his category (geographical or according to the field of activity). When professing PR blogging, the specialist must take part in conversations, read the comments of influent or key-people for all

products, he must be prepared to contribute with relevant information and intelligent comments, in the same manner used by journalists: by rapid and efficient response.

His civism can be contagious and thus a new opinion is born, developed and spread. The blog can be an useful instrument in crisis situations and plays an important part, offering accessible and valuable information that may have a strong impact on users. During crisis periods, blogs are essential for information spreading at a high speed. They allow companies or public institutions to control attacks targeting their image and rapidly counterattack. Some companies have prepared in advance blogs that they can post on the internet when they are most needed. This communication tool is part of the crisis-kit offered along with PR services. Blogs are also created for the purpose of initiating debate inside a company, reflecting internal PR. This brings immense advantages in the human resource sector. Quality blogs can even increase the morale of employees, citizens of a neighborhood or town.

As a blog administrator one must profess blogging with great care. In order to avoid mistakes it is vital to thoroughly know the company's politics, what is accepted and what is not. One must follow the image strategy, evade leaking financial or confidential information, elude posting crucial information before their official acknowledgment, prevent crisis situations for the PR team, avoid generating intrigue at work or damage relationships with other companies or entities. A blog administrator must be first of all a loyal employee in order to be invested in this function.

Conversation is by all means the most important characteristic of a blog. Even though human contact is unbeatable, the realities of the business field and civic space regarded globally make it impossible to meet each client or potential investor, whether using the telephone, fax, e-mail, forum comments and chat programs. None of these permit a simultaneous conversation with more people spread all over the globe (where one can find a computer and access to internet). None but the blog.

In order to be successful, a blog must be transparent and authentic. Companies and institutions should present themselves as they really are, communicate as a normal citizen would, allow people to know them through their blog and take feedback into consideration. People view blogs in order to learn what others think and know. In time, they will learn to trust companies, institutions, public messages. If you can communicate with them, they will find out who/what you represent; if you only want to sell something, they will leave and the blogosphere will be flooded by accuses of abusing of this new means of communication.

The blog has closed an era and gave birth to a new one, that of communication. In this new era, companies do not profit only by talking to people but by listening to them. Thus, blogs are more a means of direct and innovative communication rather than a mere replacement of the already existent medias. The advantage brought by blogs to companies is that of the interaction with the reader.

Blogs have not stolen people's hearts nor have they twisted citizens minds. They have free-willingly sought deeper relationships. In its complexity, business communication is impersonal. Consumers, the ones who should be serviced, do not feel appreciated by organizations, on the contrary, they hit themselves against the walls built by companies. Clients never reach a human voice on the telephone or a service that could solve their problem and they are never called back. Through internet, they now have access to such information. The only possibility that big companies are offered to survive this new consumers' trend is by learning all that which makes a blog successful. The key to success for a corporatist blog is open conversation, not monologue, nor exceeding commerciality. In exchange, the blog will offer the company countless opportunities to test new ideas, to discuss new lines of products, to introduce new brands on the market or to conduct social research as well as to create a change in public opinion and react against governmental decisions.

Blogging requires time, dedication and honesty. At the same time it provides new personal and strong connections. The blog is not an obsession. It is no longer a choice. Those companies and institutions that chose to stay out of the virtual world will at one point cease to exist. Consumers will surf the wildest online worlds in search of new products and services capable of satisfying their needs. Any respectable business must be represented on the virtual market.

4. Conclusions

From our point of view, the future of advertising is defined by the interactions between transmitted messages and citizens, brands and consumers. There exist participant(active) consumers but also creative

consumers. Let's not forget that these consumers buy a story, the story behind the brand. A good story is that which requires an opinion and thus an already debated story will be easily noticed. What is most important is telling the story to those willing to hear it and they will share it with others; establishing communication, being at the right time, in the right place, with the appropriate story.

The research conducted purposely for this article has revealed that consumers do not wish to evade from the market economy, on the contrary, that they try to impose their values and aspirations for a new, morally superior economical system, inside the same market economy, ingeniously punishing the ethical abuse of corporations and institutions, by promoting compatible economy agents and thorough civic values, viable to society.

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