

Google in china

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Google entered China in 2006 with high hopes of taking over the Chinese internet market. In order to become a major player for internet search engines in China, however, they had buckled and filtered search results according to the Chinese government. When Google.cn was launched, a loud public outcry over its giving in to the Chinese government on censoring and filtering search engine results, the company faced a communications crisis. Since Google had always been known for its free thinking, this seemed a vast contradiction. From a communications standpoint, Google's greatest vulnerability in this crisis lay with a tarnished public image.

Since the company's inception, Google had enjoyed a reputation for ingenuity and creativity. Google had changed the way people use and search on the internet that was free from pop up advertisements and organized information. They promoted different and radical ideas for development in the workplace to foster the creative atmosphere at the Googleplex in California. The corporate public image is "the sum total of perceptions of the corporation's personality characteristics." (Spector, 1961 p. 47) Google's had an outstanding public image evidenced by the fact that it was one of the most popular search engines in the world.

When Google decided to enter the Chinese market, the company was forced by the Chinese government to impose self-censorship if they were to operate within the boundaries of China. Though executives disagreed with censoring, they "grudgingly agreed that this is the ethical price they have to pay to place servers in mainland China." (2006 Jan) If an internet search engine did not filter search results, the government would use its own, which highly slowed down the rate at which the servers could process the request. "The

filtered results would remove any reference to a number of subjects. This policy in China did not align itself with the public image that Google had established and sought to maintain. This new policy brought about harsh criticism, " Google's statements about respecting online privacy are at the height of hypocrisy in view of its strategy in China, said groups like the RWB in January of 2006. Google's policy of self-censorship in China did not sit well with the public or human rights organizations. Though Google seemed to promote free-thinking and free speech on one hand, they were censoring and filtering with the other.

Google lost credibility with the public, thus tarnishing its public image and " losing 1% of the U. S. market in one month," as reported in The Business. (2006, Aug) " Image credibility is based on the constituency's perception of the organization" (Argenti, 2009, p. 39). When the public image of a company has been compromised it " can make a huge difference in determining the success or failure of the organization" (Argenti, 2009, p. 40). When the public loses confidence in a company and what they stand for, they no longer wish to use its product.

In response, executives at Google attempted to convince the public that they could handle the balancing act between censorship and providing information, and gain back public trust and confidence. Google's greatest vulnerability in the ordeal with China was damage done to its reputation because we should, as stated in the Bible, " Earn a reputation for living well in God's eyes and the eyes of the people. "(Proverbs 3: 4) When running a company it is highly important to preserve good standing because when "

good will or trust is lacking, the organization will fail at achieving its objectives (Argenti, 2009, p. 40).