Global public relations and multicultural world

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Neil Payne, Director of Kwintessential, a UK based cross cultural communications consultancy claimed that the Public Relations industry is responsible for creating and maintaining relationships between clients and customers. Through areas such as brand management, advertising, media relations and crisis management, PR practitioners seek to foster interest, trust and belief in a product or company. They are aware of how best to carry this out when dealing within their own nations and cultures, however, when dealing with a foreign audience it is critical that cross cultural differences are recognised.

PR practitioners who wish to build positive and strong relationships with their growing foreign audience need to be aware of increasing diversities and to deal with them effectively. Nowadays one of the principal tasks of public relations professionals consists in reflecting the complexity of the environment and understanding the different attitudes, values and expectations of its interlocutors, possibly through a one-with-one dialogue (Silvia Ravazzani 2006, 11).

As Muzi Falconi has said, " understanding others also implies knowing who they are… if each interlocutor is different, then the organization maximizes

effectiveness by adopting a communication mix which is at least oriented to a two way, tendentially symmetric relationship system." Identifying particular stakeholder groups and tuning organizational behaviour and communications to their different needs is a huge but highly rewarding challenge.

A hope of Stephen P. Banks is by better understanding the influences of diversity on public relations and identifying effective ways people in public relations can response to social changes, the current and following generations of practitioners will be better equipped to communicate in a rapidly changing world. Hence, this study is to examine is a framework for global Public Relations standards in a multicultural world is desirable and possible?

Global Public Relations and Multicultural World

We live in a rapidly changing world society, which is increasingly bringing people of various cultures in closer interaction with each other. In one sense, every different people are from different culture. We each have our own symbol system and ways of defining our life. At the other extreme, it's common to speak of ' globalization' or the ' global village' as if all but remote tribal people shared a common culture of technological, capitalistic modernity (Bernad 1995, 18).

Different cultures prioritize their values differently in relation to the pattern of relevant to the story of their people. One may cause the other one to feel uncomfortable not intentionally if he or she doesn't understand the listeners' culture. For example, an Indonesia student from North Sulawesi expressed

his frustration that when he asked a neighbour if she could introduce them to a house helper, she answered " Yes." When asked, " When?" she answered," Tomorrow." As is common in Java, " tomorrow" never came. This is a way to refuse one's request impolitely in his country. The neighbour wasn't meant to refuse the request from the Indonesian, but from the word she used had caused misunderstanding.

Thus, Krishnamurthy Sriramesh and Dejan VerÄÌiÄÌ claimed that communication influences and is influenced by culture. Most definitions of the term public relations originating in the United States and Europe recognized that communication (both mass and interpersonal) is the foundation of the public relations profession and is a means to the end of building relationships between organizations and their relevant publics. Logically, culture should affect public relations, and public relations help alter culture.

A reason for fostering public relations relationships and building the field's reputation as a management function is to support diversity programmes and bring them under public relations' wing (Brigitta R. Brunner 2005, 4). What emerged is that effective diversity management has a strategic value for organizations and for public relations in particular. There is a strong connection between the strategic management of diversity and that of public relations activities. Inclusiveness today represents a strategic decision and an important aspect of the organizational value system, beyond merely meeting legal obligations and requirements (Silvia Ravazzani 2006, 11).

It's worth to discuss that how public relations can contribute substantially to organizations by managing cultural diversity and reducing any complexities that affect business performance. There was complete agreement among the 10 top business leaders interviewed that understanding cultural sensitivity among all ethnic groups is very important in formulating and conducting their business strategy, as all corporations studied are manned by diverse employees, especially in corporate communication departments (Jawad Syed and Mustafa Ã-zbilgin 2010, 29).

They also emphasized that in global business practice, business and multicultural facets can't be separated, as understanding different cultures may benefit their organizational strategy development. Therefore, managing their business services using a public relations strategy which takes account of multicultural sensitivities is vital for business success (Jawad Syed and Mustafa Ã-zbilgin 2010, 29-32).

Therefore, public relations professions should list out one or more frameworks for public relations standards in multicultural world so that the young public relations practitioners could have a guideline when dealing with multicultural organizations as well as countries. Tasks given might be including launching a public relations campaign, deciding for brand name or slogan and etc which will definitely involve in cross-culture diversities for international organizations. By understanding what the main cultures of the target market are, it's easier to get your products into the market.

In other words, if an organization wants to succeed in promoting their products or campaign internationally and cross-culture, they must run an in-

depth analysis on the countries culture before they launched or they might need a framework for standards cross-culture diversities as reference. By aware of the cultures, an organization could reach their target market's world without offense. This normally drives to success of the campaign or product especially for international organizations.

Examples of International Company's Practices

Here are two examples of international public relations practices in multicultural countries taken from a joint report by United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and United Nations Global Compact, 2009 with a title of ' Doing Business in a Multicultural World: Challenges and Opportunities".

Coca-Cola Company

The Coca-Cola Company operates in more than 200 countries and territories with different cultures, political systems, religions and histories. The company believes that it can only build a sustainable business if the communities in which it operates are sustainable, and it continually strives to do business in a way that furthers multicultural understanding, and enhances its reputation with all consumers.

One of the company's core beliefs is to add value through its brands and its people, and it puts a strong emphasis on engaging consumers in a way that is culturally-sensitive and that builds trust with the communities in which it operates. As Ahmet Bozer, the President of the Coca-Cola Company's Eurasia and Africa Group, notes, " successfully operating in a multicultural way is the oxygen of our company".

At Coca-Cola, diversity is a business strategy that is a source of innovation and creativity. As a consumer facing company, the diversity of the company's workforce has to reflect the diversity of the societies in which it does business.

By way of example, the Eurasia and Africa Group's leadership team comprises 17 managers with 12 different nationalities and a diversity of gender, race and religion. Similarly, the company's Operating Committee comprises 10 senior executives with 7 nationalities. The success of Coca-Cola's business in over 200 countries ultimately depends on its ability to connect with a multitude of communities, cultures, geographies, religions and languages. And that is only possible if its own workforce reflects that diversity.

From Ahmet Bozer's perspective, " In order to be successful in a multicultural environment, you need to demonstrate respect, sensitivity, open mindedness, and a genuine interest in understanding differences between people". The brand values and optimism inherent to the brand of Coca-Cola allow the company to work across cultural differences and to connect meaningfully with consumers. One example of this connection is the celebration of occasions that bring communities together, such as the Thanksgiving or Christmas holidays, the Chinese New Year, or the " iftar" meal during Ramadan.

For Coca-Cola's Eurasia and Africa Group, which covers a large number of countries with significant Muslim populations, Ramadan represents a time of connection and optimism, when people try to live more positively, embracing

the human values of support, respect, sharing and tolerance. As a result, Coca-Cola's mainstream advertising and promotional campaigns are accompanied by social and community activities, along with employee events, reflecting the important Ramadan values of charity and sharing with family and friends. These activities include the organization of Ramadan evening festivities, the distribution of gifts to mothers in particular, and the provision of food and beverages and charitable donations (zakaat) for the poor and needy.

Microsoft Corporation

Founded in 1975, Microsoft is a worldwide leader in information technology, providing software, services and IT solutions to business, communities and individuals. For Microsoft and the entire IT industry, meeting the needs of a diverse global community is both an opportunity and a challenge. While developments in IT are unlocking powerful economic and educational prospects for people in more cultures and geographies than ever before, there are still many people who cannot access IT due to language barriers. There are approximately 6, 000 languages and another 5, 000 dialects spoken around the world today. However, if alarming trends continue, scientists predict that by the end of this century half of all human languages will face extinction.

In 2004 Microsoft launched the Local Language Programme (LLP), an initiative that allows communities to use globally recognized work- and education-enhancing tools while maintaining the use of traditional languages.

Through Community Glossary Projects, the company works with governments, academia and volunteers to translate Office and Windows into consistent, culturally appropriate terminology for previously under-served language groups. Once complete, the glossary forms the basis of a Language Interface Pack (LIP), which can be freely downloaded and installed from the company's LLP website. For some users, the programme provides access to computers for the first time; for others, it is a chance to improve productivity and self-expression by working and learning in the language they are most confident in.

More than 60 translations have been created under the programme, including 12 in sub-Saharan Africa. In Nigeria, Microsoft has supported translations in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, which can be used by more than 60 million people across West Africa. When asked about the programme, Microsoft's Citizenship Manager for Nigeria, Jummai Umar Ajiojola, commented that it was " just the beginning" for the Local Language Programme and called on stakeholders of other language groups to take up the challenge to preserve and protect their languages.

In Africa, Microsoft will continue to use the LLP in combination with other developmental initiatives under the global Unlimited Potential programme to further extend digital inclusion, foster much needed IT skills and stimulate the growth of local, native-language-based IT economies.

Conclusion

Over the years, models of multiculturalism have been ignored. However, they are now acknowledged as essential to good public relations in

developing a business as well as country. LaBahn and Harich (1997) agreed that understanding cultural sensitivity such as language and religious rituals may reduce conflict within an organization and enhance organizational performance.

As a result, Sriramesh (2003, 511) argued that to be ' multicultural professionals, a comprehensive public relations education should deliver knowledge on the linkages between public relations and key environmental variables that influence the practice internationally. It requires a holistic view and a global and multilingual approach in understanding international public relations rather than merely polishing the image of communication services. Indeed, there is an urgent need to develop a framework for global international public relations standards in a multicultural world to bring out the implications of its practice.