



PRécis

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Dealing with Media can be often frustrating, says CMRL's CGM !

It was quite befitting that as PRSI, Chennai Chapter, was moving into its mood with Madras Week Celebrations, S. Krishnamoorthy, Chief General Manager - Chennai Metro Rail Ltd., Chennai's prestigious project, addressed our members on "How to manage crisis?" He expertly rolled out details about the Chennai Metro Rail, such a massive, challenging infrastructure project, with L&T among the prime contractors. He held the complete attention of the PR professionals as he outlined the several issues that often turned out to be huge communication challenges – which called for PR intervention. So, how did he do that?

His tasks mostly begin with listening to various sections and departments and coordinating with them on all issues very closely. Often, people from the technical departments tend to be dominating with their views and suggestions. Also, he observed, people are quite liberal in throwing up a lot of suggestions and advices. Krishnamoorthy had, however, learned to put to good use his PR experience and tackle only the relevant issues by finding such solutions which served best the interests of both the public and the government.

Whenever some issue came up, it was important that CMRL had to be seen to be pro-active and giving out appropriate information, but without compromising on confidentiality. The area of land acquisition happens to be the most important domain. This is also a subject where political interference usually tends to be high. Often, the public is instigated to approach the judiciary to seek redress. In the process, the project gets delayed. The conse-

quence of such incidents is that the execution of the project is delayed and there is also the inevitable cost over-run, which is a real concern.

As Chief General Manager of CMRL, Krishnamoorthy deals with the media frequently. There are many

media persons from the print and electronic media channels who do look for information to report on. But one needs to very carefully identify the right kind of persons to interact and co-ordinate with. Just to make some news quite sensational, often one can see a total mismatch between what the caption or the heading says and the news that is actually reported. Not just that. Calls come from the media reporters at even odd hours. But one has to keep very cool, considering the possible reactions from the political circles, government officials as well as the public. The repercussions could be quite severe!

Krishnamoorthy made a solid observation that it is for the Public Relations Department to obtain all the relevant information from all the departments from every quarter – both horizontally and vertically. They need to be up to date with their information. But one has also to take care that information is closely studied and appropriately whetted, before sharing with media. In spite of this, it is quite possible that



S. Krishnamoorthy lights the kuthuvilakku marking the commencement of Chapter activities for the year 2013-14 as V. Ramesh Kumar, R.K. Dharan, Dr. K. Sundari and G. Krishnan look on.

some overzealous personnel from any of the organizations in some way connected with the work, or from other wings, may leak some information to media or other outsiders. It may be damaging.

In its efforts to bring in some transparency, CMRL thought it good to encourage online interviews. But it turned out that this approach did not yield any positive results but instead caused more damage to CMRL's image.

Sometimes, ridiculous issues are raised. "Why we do not have provision for toilets in the train?" are the kind of questions which come up. People should realize that the maximum time of travel through a metro train will be only just 30 minutes. In any case, adequate number of toilets will be made available at the stations. Then why do we need toilets in the metro trains? But we also see that such queries are only meant to create some sensation. Such pointless

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R.K. Baratan handing over a memento to S. Krishnamoorthy. Others seen in the picture are V. Ramesh Kumar, Sashi Nair and R.K. Dharan.

questions only prolong the media briefing sessions and yield nothing useful. CMRL found it better to directly utilize the media to project its road map, progress and achievements through release of timely information to them. It was better than having any live

panel discussion with CMRL having to address on issues directly.

Dwelling on other related issues, Krishnamoorthy said the management of CMRL takes care to have regular interaction with its staff by participating in the meetings of various associations and clubs where views are exchanged and important matters clarified. Charity projects and welfare programmes are also taken up regularly. CMRL also pays attention to website and social networking sites like Facebook, You Tube etc. where data is updated.

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PR and Media need to spruce up their image, says Sashi Nair

Sashi Nair, a member of our own PR fraternity from PRSI, Chennai Chapter, now appointed Director of Press Institute of India, and Research Institute for Newspaper Development, and Editor of PII's journal Vidura and RIND's classy journals - Grassroots and RIND Survey - was felicitated on 24th July' 13. To say that he was also the Editor of PRSI Chennai Chapter's in-house newsletter PRecis, which twice bagged the Best House Journal award from the national body of PRSI during his tenure, is just like carrying coal to the castle! Daniel Dass mentioned in his introductory remarks that even as the editor of Precis which must have been a child's play for him, he was a tough taskmaster who wouldn't let even a small error slip by! Yes, truly! We know the high standards he had set. Sashi Nair's illustrious career through PR and journalism is a mere reflection of the commanding heights he has reached in journalism.

Responding to the warm felicitations, Sashi Nair began in a lighter vein, saying he had never imagined that a day would come when he would be felicitated by the PR fraternity he had originally belonged to! He recalled his association with the stalwarts of PR and mentors like R.K. Baratan, S. Muthiah and Satyan Bhatt and many others like V.S. Ramana and Thomas Abraham, who

made the grand journey through his career so adventurous and interesting. With persons like Muthiah who was indeed a tough taskmaster, he had learned what he couldn't have learned from education alone. Without the encouragement from so many people he would have been 'probably lost in the world of public relations and journalism' (Well, journalism's gain but PR's loss! We wish him all the best in his new assignment too!).

Giving a brief background about his present assignment, Sashi Nair said the Press Institute of India and the Research Institute of Newspaper Development had merged in the 90's. PII which was established in 1963 was managed by senior and distinguished journalists like Chanchal Sarkar and others from the 60's through 80's, but then like all good institutions, it 'hit a slope' and then moved from Delhi to Chennai. RIND was set up to look into improving the technical aspects of newspaper printing and publishing and is now concerned also with the other forms of media. The other objective is also to provide technical and other support to working journalists, to offer them good knowledge, skills and at-work experience. Workshops are conducted and intending journalists are also encouraged to contribute articles to RIND.

Sashi Nair noted that both Public Relations practitioners and journalists



S. Krishnamoorthy felicitates Sashi Nair on behalf of PRSI. R.K. Dharan looks on.

had taken a beating in the recent years. PR did not have a great image after the Neera Radia tape incident. Its image was at the lowest. But the media also was buffeted by the same Radia Tapes expose, - there was the talk about 'paid news'. A lack of self-regulation was seen with media. Whether the need for it was realized by media was not clear. There was a bit of sleaze also seen! PR and the Media are at the cross roads. Efforts are seen to control the Media, be it UK or India. But there are a lot of editors who will not take that. It is a serious matter and one needs to find some light through debates and discussions.

"In felicitating me", Sashi Nair said, "you are gently reminding me that there are some new challenges and responsibilities. Your honouring me with this plaque is also a great motivator and I know I need to do something worthwhile".

Madras Film Industry was a Path Breaker says K. Hariharan

K. Hariharan, Director, L.V. Prasad Film and TV Academy, addressed the PRSI Chennai Chapter members on 21st August '13, on "100 years of Tamil Cinema in Madras". A few media personnel also attended the meeting. After graduating from the Pune Film Institute, Hariharan had a rich exposure to film making and directing. He is a visiting professor to many foreign universities and a member of various government organisation involving cultural promotions. With his rich experience as a film maker, critic, guide and teacher, Hariharan made a very unique presentation in his engaging and interactive style. He said film making started in the British India era and Dada Saheb Phalke was probably the first Indian movie maker. According to him, the film Industry in India can be considered to be still in its infancy,



K. Hariharan kept us absorbed with his narration about the history of the film industry.

compared to the corporate sector. The turnover of film industry is not all that significant. At L.V. Prasad, he had tried his hands at all kinds of jobs but could make his first move only in 1955. Reasons were the difficulty of access to technology and finance or something or

the other. The environment in Free India did help in film-making and development and there were no pre-requisites or qualifications needed to become a film maker. All that was needed was only a business acumen and dedication, Hariharan said.

Movie theatres were the first place where the caste considerations and other such traditional notions were cast aside and all types of people sat together to watch a film. Cinemas entered into the cultural milieu and the Alwars and Nayanmars were the artists who delivered the most and projected their sacred views. Eroticism was not seen as obscene and was accepted by the people. Madras Film Industry grew by leaps and bounds and helped the city to develop as a commercial and business

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Krishnamoorthy said he was conscious of the fact that CMRL is a very easy target for all sorts of accusations. It can be blamed for the breakdown of telephone lines, be the reason for power trip up, or traffic jams, and such. Quite often it is CMRL that is accused straightaway, without even realizing that there is no relevance or linkage between CMRL and any such

issue, leaving CMRL with the task of having to respond.

Krishnamoorthy said it must be realized that after any unforeseen event, it is always easy to do a post mortem. These days, 'investigative journalism' tends to try and somehow fix the responsibility straight on CMRL for any untoward incident, especially for the occasional accidents that take place (in spite of all precautions), mainly to earn the

appreciations of the lay public.

The media should have unbiased reporting, Krishnamoorthy said. There must be some serious analytical approach with both the pros and cons equally well analysed. Media should also focus on the need for public co-operation. For example, the work-in-progress barricades which CMRL puts up to facilitate its work should not be used as a billboard for all sorts of advertisements. Such a thing is never done in developed countries where people respect such notices. In India, the free use of CMRL's barricades with all sorts of advertisements by callous people to enhance just their own business growth, or for personal publicity, defeats the very purpose of putting up the barricades and also the safety notifications so earnestly issued by the organization for public good.

It was a very interesting talk from Krishnamoorthy and we learned about the travails of one who deals with PR issues in such challenging environments!



Responding to the warm felicitations, Sashi Nair said in a way PRSI Chennai Chapter was reminding him of the bigger challenges ahead in his career.



R.K. Dharan seen complimenting K. Hariharan on his highly engaging presentation about the film industry in Madras.

centre. The well developed maritime and banking industries supported the film industry quite well. Madras Presidency, as it was then known, was the largest and it ensured development of various industries in a balanced manner.

Hariharan felt Madras Cinema was the National (Indian) Cinema. Stalwarts in the Madras film industry like Nagi Reddy, A.V. Meyyappan Chettiyar, L. V. Prasad, to name a few, could transcreate into films the best available fictions, not merely translating them to screen.

Film making was not restricted to only Tamil language. They were also made in the other South Indian languages like Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada too. They were made in Hindi as well. Another famed producer, Chinnappa Devar, who distinguished himself as an excellent director, made the one same film – often involving an animal or two - ten times over but in different languages and they were all successful! It was native wisdom that drove these film makers. Films then were made for all ages and the storylines kept the children particularly engaged, watching out for the animals that always seemed to be lurking in the background somewhere.

Hariharan stated that it was his father, Krishnan, who worked with Kodak, who brought colour to film industry and set up Gemini Lab in Madras. In spite of the achievements recorded by Madras Cinema, somehow it is still Bollywood film industry that is considered to be superior and is thought of as the National Cinema, maybe because of the political leverage it had due to the dominance of Hindi as a language or on account of the larger number of viewers which offers a bigger market.

However, the Dravidian Movement and politics were to be the backbone of Tamil Cinema and these blended well. But there was a gradual downfall of this movement as the culture changed and the original mission was given up. Stalwarts such as Balu Mahendra, Bharathiraja and Bhagyaraja raised their voices against this

and the wind of change was welcomed by the masses.

Rajinikant was the opposite of MGR but was accepted and endorsed by the public. Whistling was considered vulgar but today it is elevated to the status of an art! Mani Ratnam and Shankar were countering the transition. They echoed liberalisation and enjoyed taking the cinematic shots differently. The aesthetic quality of Bollywood films has a link with Mani Ratnam's methods.

Greater changes started later with films like Myna. In spite of creating wonderful movies, film makers like Ameer and Myskin preferred to screen their films first in Tamil Nadu, probably because they felt insecure to some degree. Hariharan feels that Film making is not a low vocation and need not be viewed condescendingly. Cinemas are creative and what we see as movies is really a form of art.

Hariharan went on further to engage the audience with some more interesting

observations. Even as the industry developed, harmonium and piano, which were once considered as instruments fit only to be played in brothels, were used in many movies providing beautiful musical notes.

Indian Government and Censor Board seldom take the critical portrayal of police, judiciary or politicians in films in the right way. The freedom of expression through this medium is restricted. Hariharan felt that the government should set up an academy (like Sangeet Natak Academy) to develop cinema as a creative media and hasten its growth. Corporate status has never been accorded to the Indian Cinema. Hariharan felt the Public Relations Society of India could step in and help in this direction.

Cinematic imagination can be all pervading. If a movie shows scenes from Assam, you are unknowingly drawn to thoughts about S.D. Burman. Today currency, cinema and cricket are the 3-Cs ruling our culture. Though Tamil films made an entry when audio technology stepped in, trends of segregated audience was always prevalent.

Powerful way of expansion is to focus on Finance, Distribution, Diversification and Spread. PR is a management function and cinema is one of the media that can be very helpful in achieving the goals.



The audience had a broad overview of the Madras film industry - with K.Hariharan narrating its history so lucidly.

George Jegadesh “tweets” to PR Professionals all about TWITTER !

George Jegadesh started his interesting session by asking the audience how many were familiar with Twitter. Fortunately, there were a few! He then explained to the audience the basics about all that could be baffling about Twitter: its audience, its demographics and how top brands are using it for successful marketing.

Twitter is a micro blogging and social networking site. It is a free service. It is the No.3 social networking site, the top two being Facebook and LinkedIn. Twitter is designed to be the SMS of internet. Follow, and Followers, are the important concepts here. It is also possible to un-follow someone. The message here is known as ‘tweet’. A tweet is a little post, within 140 characters. Retweet is when one of the followers likes the tweet and forwards it. The syntax ‘rt’ is used for retweet and it will have the name of the author of the original tweet. For mentioning other users @ - followed by the user name - is used. In Twitter it is also possible to send a direct message (or dm). It is important to know the lingo like dm, or ‘rt’ in twitter. It is also possible to delete a particular tweet, but once someone has re-tweeted it is out of control. So it is important to know what you want to write (or ‘tweet’ about) and think twice before tweeting. ‘#’ is used to drag a message. Optionally, one can also add location or picture.

Twitter earns its revenue from advertisements. In the current year, Twitter earned revenue of 600 million dollars. It is projected to earn 1 billion dollars in revenue in the next year, and is going public. Twitter was started in the year 2006 by a graduate. Just seven years later, Twitter is going public! Twitter has done good integration with the mobile phone. The significance about Twitter is that it is economical, smart and witty! There are 555 million global users. China is ranked number one, India is in the second position and US comes third. Chinese use Twitter through a VPN as it is banned in China. There are about 135,000 users using



George Jegadesh brought us up to date about Twitter. At the end of his presentation, most of us must have hooked on to Twitter!

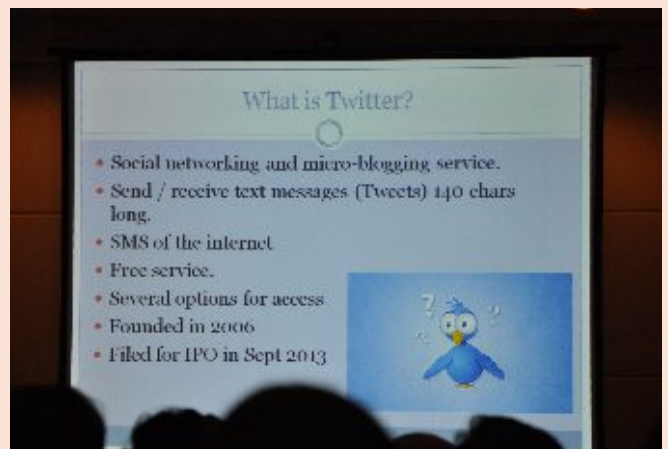
Twitter every day. Unique visitors are 190 million per month. If these numbers are compared with Facebook, it would dwarf Twitter. Average number of tweets per day is 58 million and average tweets per second are 9,000. When Michael Jackson passed away in 2009, there were nearly 2300 tweets per second and it was a record! Current record is 13,000 tweets a second for a particular football game!

Because Twitter is tightly integrated with mobile, most Twitter users are on mobile. Twitter is also a good place to market products or services. When it comes to marketing, sufficient money should be spent to get the messages to millions of people. Ford has 14 full time employees, just to run the company’s Twitter account. Once the tweets are fine-tuned, one can get full benefits from Twitter as a marketing tool.

Knowing who the audience are is also very important in Twitter so as to create the tweets accordingly. Nearly 80% of revenue for twitter comes from US and the remaining 20% from rest of the

world. So it is important to know the demographics of US users. About 16% of all internet users use Twitter. A typical Twitter user is aged below 30 years, is a city dweller, and has some college education. The most active group is African American group. They have a tight network and have done some good work and caused some damage as well. When Trevo Martin, a young black kid was shot dead in Florida, this group was the compelling force in breaking out the story. In US, men and women users are equally active. In India, there are 33 million users and counting. Nearly 60% users are male and 36% users have at least a Bachelor's Degree, which is pretty much in line with the demographics of the US. Some 25% of the users are in Maharashtra, 15% in Tamil Nadu, and 12% in Uttar Pradesh. Most of the Twitter users are in the cities, as in the U.S., with Bangalore and Chennai having 7% each and Mumbai with 8%.

Twitter is a smarter and intelligent social networking medium, compared to Facebook. People use Twitter not only for socializing, but also for marketing, and this activity is steadily climbing. All the top global fortune 500 companies have a large Twitter presence. It is important to have Twitter as one of the marketing channels. Twitter is also an amazing place for finding solutions to problems. People market their product



George Jegadesh unravelled the mysteries of Twitter in his free, easy style. But all that data was mind boggling!



George Jegadesh receives a memento from G. Krishnan, Past Chairman, PRSI Chennai as Dr. Sundari Krishnamurthy applauds.

or service using twitter. A large number of people want to know about a particular product or service and Twitter opens its doors for such information. A large number of people, before signing up with a product or service, want to see reviews about it and look up Twitter for opinions from existing customers or users. It is also easy to publish discount/coupon codes on Twitter. Twitter provides revenue for target marketing or opportunity to do damage control or to show empathy in difficult circumstances. CSR is also huge in its dimensions and Twitter provides ways to do it. For local areas, if people are tweeting about a particular issue, one can get some idea about the problem and address it. It is a great way for social care activities and for connecting with customers.

There are two ways for advertising in Twitter. First is to send free tweets; the second is to pay for tweets to put it in through newsfeed of some people interested in a particular product. It is not charged unless someone clicks on it or retweets. It is based on number of responses for the tweet, therefore it is important to compose tweet in 140 characters and yet generate a lot of response while trying to promote the product. That is why a lot of companies hire people just to manage their Twitter accounts. Trending topics cost around US\$ 200,000.

How is Twitter useful for PR professionals? In US, even in 2010, more than half of the reporters used twitter actively for research, to get ideas for their stories. For a PR professional it

is important to connect with reporters so that they are in sync with what they have to say. Twitter also helps during crisis situations. As a PR practitioner you are in the frontline and how you handle crisis is very important. It is important to respond quickly

because damage control is done the sooner you respond. One must compose tweets for damage control in a delicate manner with more empathy. Responding with a quick tweet before media blows it out of proportion works better than most other methods. Networks cannot be built on Twitter overnight. Crowd sourcing research and solving problems are also important in Twitter. Crowd source is basically using crowd whether you pay or not, to do certain things and get information or input. One popular thing is crowd funding, where one starts a project and raises money from unknown people and in return you give them something from your project. All this is possible with Twitter and these are its powerful aspects. As you build a professional network, you have opportunity to learn and develop professionally.

The concept of Twitter chats is also very important where people who are experienced in certain fields hold a forum and send tweets with particular #.

It is a forum for asking questions and they tweet back with ideas. It is a great way to learn from one another. They have specific timings set out and at that time you send tweet and someone responds back. So it is a great way to learn how other people do things.

Why Twitter is important for journalism? Twitter is very effective for breaking news. If Twitter had been around on 9th September 2001 when the Twin Towers in New York went down, there would have been torrents of information from people. This gives us an idea about what citizens' journalism can do. It is also possible to tweet news article from news website like New York Times, Wall Street Journal, The Hindu etc., drawing attention to a particular story.

There are also successful brands that have used Twitter effectively. Jet Blue is a small airline in US, like Jet Airways but of a much smaller scale but the service is impeccable, just like Jet Airways. In one such incident, there was a small grievance from one of the travellers sitting for an hour, waiting for his flight and there was no feedback. Jet Blue responded right away and apologized for the delay and also asked the concerned person to check their website and see what they can expect in such situations. Jet Blue did not hesitate to say "Sorry"! This shows how nicely they handle delicate situations.

Starbucks with 150 million customers have so many products to

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A view of the audience totally engrossed in what Jegadesh had to say about Twitter for PR.

You must go beyond mere Objective Reporting - suggests ace journalist Stephanie Shapiro

Listing the awesome academic and professional credentials of Stephanie Shapiro, Lecturer in Journalism from Maryland, U.S.A., while introducing the journalist-speaker of the evening on 27th November '13, Dr. Sundari Krishnamurthy made a thoughtful observation that "It was the long yards of materials which teachers gather over the years when teaching" that makes their observations very interesting to listen to. While rolling out the multifaceted profile of Shapiro, Dr. Sundari had made us to anticipate a very thought provoking presentation from the speaker – and so it was. As a lecturer, journalist and feature writer, Shapiro had visited several countries from different cultures and met people from different walks of life. Her experiences and observations obviously have molded her into becoming the complete journalist that she is.

With her huge experience as journalist-philosopher or a journalist-teacher, Shapiro seemed to be convinced that reporters and journalists must look beyond being objective. For budding student journalists, who dream of becoming great journalists, the much tooted idea of maintaining 'objectivity' in reporting must be a kind of trauma. "They're told you have to be objective. You cannot have your own opinion. Your views should not be a factor, but I have to disagree with that" she said.

Shapiro said everyone is influenced by the culture, the country, the societies and the families one comes from and their systems, values and beliefs and all such factors. The effect of such influences on individuals is inevitable. It is true for journalists as much as for anyone else. She would rather say objectivity is an abstract idea. It affects fairness, truth or different kinds of truth. Fairness should be the outcome of objectivity in reporting, guarding against any kind of bias. There are influences of economic opportunities, castes, or education on every story.



Stephanie Shapiro was emphatic that journalistic reports and features must look for sense of truth - emotional as well as factual, and not put up bland stories.

Is it really that simple (to be objective)? If one could look into the world through 'lenses' and observe closely, you will realize that your perceptions are sharpened by the institutions, the country, the culture and the like.

Objectivity, in some ways, is impossible. Can a newspaper you represent have one view in one part of the country, and same view for another part of the country? Do all the newspapers and media have the same standard of objectives? They don't.

Shapiro illustrated through some interesting examples, how journalism evolved and how Story Telling as a form of journalistic reporting has generally appealed to the emotions of people and also looked more even-handed and credible. Story telling actually attracts readers in a profitable way 'emotionally' and therefore is a better way of reporting. They give meaning to an event. Shapiro recounted the 9/11 terror event that shook America. Reporters created humane stories, not only of heroes inside the planes who heroically sought to divert the plane to Pennsylvania in

order that Washington was not hit, as also those who were sitting inside absolutely terrified, yet they were also looked at as heroes too, because they were terror victims.

Shapiro said she would like to feel about "What's going on?" and look for the sense of truth - the emotional truth as much as the factual truth. It helps one to see the truth in a much bigger way which may be even more important than the actual truth. One must have a sense of place, and a sense of the story or the issue, while reporting.

View points must be represented equally. If one brings his or her own experiences too in the story, one can add even more value to the story. News reporting is a little trickier and students are often afraid to express themselves while doing that. She also recounted a feature she did about retired people who started something very innovative, called "Time Bank" where their time was invested for people needing services. So 'time' was the currency equivalent there and it was a wonderful way for older people to save up the 'hours' and help people who needed to be taken to a doctor or such. It was in a way an effort that was extending into the healthcare system and so an interesting story. You will miss such stories if you read only the mainstream news all the time!

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Stephanie Shapiro seen receiving a memento from S. Muthiah, Past Chairman, PRSI, Chennai with R.K. Dharan joining in with a word of appreciation for her fine presentation.



An engaging moment in a discussion about journalism? Stephanie Shapiro has a word with S. Muthiah and Dr. K. Sundari.

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But, she agreed, one still has to be on guard. You do write about what you want to but often everything need not be

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Mr. George Jegadesh “tweets”.....

talk about. They find time to talk about something in their tweets to engage and connect with their customers. They tweet about something their audience likes, besides the company and its products. Another neat example is about a small chain retailer in US, tweeting about the discount/coupon code one can use in any of their stores. By giving your audience or followers a coupon or discount, you keep them amazed and not bored. Another example is where a high end retailer is talking about New York's weather on a hot day and asks people to make up their hair in buns to minimize discomfort! Note that he is not talking about his own product, but rather about what the customers are thinking about on a hot day and is building a bond with customers! Engaging with the customers and showing empathy makes the bond stronger.

One should not take oneself seriously on Twitter. It is still a social networking site. If the customers are using the product or service of a particular brand even after business hours, one needs to help them to provide some customer service during that time

the way somebody told you, while you talked to that somebody on the street. Almost everyone “puts a spin on things”! But also think about who you are writing for? If you are going to write a no nonsense, 'objective communication' which has no emotion, no story, then you are not going to get very far.

People respond more to stories with an emotional appeal than a mere, static report. You need not discard everything. Understand where the underpinning facts are, if you have an agenda. Intelligently reinforce the

values - of your world, your culture and your country. Through story telling you help people to bring their values back. Even when you are not being objective, you are also not to be seen as “This is what I want to see”! Also think about people you do not know who may not have the same experiences the way you can relate to, because of their poor standard of life. You must have a regard for everyone, be fair and accurate.

Shapiro concluded by saying that in her view journalism is about helping the people to see the happenings and things around them in a new way, even if it's a story about a local market being revamped where there's a fantastic story about a range of people – honest and compelling, recognition of everybody and above all something to learn about.

too. Delta airlines did a nice job with customer support. When a gentleman wrote about a baggage issue, Delta promptly replied by directing him where he should go. In India there are brands which have used Twitter successfully. MTV India tweets about Bollywood, cricket, entertainment, movies, anything and everything. Their goal is to connect with youth and they do it pretty well. Tata Docomo did a good job with customer service and kept their customers happy with fun contests, discount codes and coupons. IPL has engaged very well with its cricket crazy fans. NDTV has done excellent jobs of

handling breaking news as well.

It is very important to engage with followers/customers. It is also essential to find out what the customers like, what problems they have and to address them straightaway so that people's feelings are not hurt. Brands that quickly respond to queries are always winners. We live in a generation where we want instant gratification. Response for a tweet should be within 15 minutes, response after 30 minutes may turn out to be too late! A dose of wit and humour is helpful. If you are boring, people will not follow you quickly.



George Jegadesh and his wife, V.S. Ramana (middle), Dr. K. Sundari and V. Ramesh Kumar, after all that lively tweeting about Twitter for the benefit of PR professionals.