

Transforming Business Communication through Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Social media is changing the way people interact, present ideas and information, and communicate and it is growing bigger than ever. Social Media, in its basic sense, is a shift how people discover, read and share news information and content. The fusion of sociology and technology, transforming monologues (one to many) and is the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into publishers. Social media allows people to connect in the online world to form relationships for personal, political and business use. Social Media is a real time approach to communication and engagement.

It provides you the ability to self publish and promote yourself, your products and your thoughts in real time to literally millions of people who can respond back.

In this age of globalization, the world has become too small a place and the credit goes to the electronic media and portals. Communication has become effective as never before due to the advent of internet. The social networking sites have also played a crucial role in bridging all people at a common platform where they can meet like-minded people or find old friends and communicate with them. It has become a potential mean to relation building and stay in touch with all known.

Mass communication is yet another dimension of communication social networking, whereby a business organisation endeavors to reach out to a wider section of the society. In fact, mass communication aims at reaching out well-defined target group. It attracts their attention and hence plays a bigger role in and for the business organizations. So, at this point it becomes important to organization that they have adequate media management skills or business etiquettes that take care of all media related activities.

With business going global and operating in geographically and culturally dispersed location a number of communication related issues hence become relevant and require focus. Networking, perception management, crisis communication, motivation, persuasion- all these factors and even many more deserve attention today which our business communication students/ business houses must be fully equipped with.

This paper aims at highlighting important issues with special focus on the role of Business Communication courses taught by teachers, skills learnt by students especially targeting the electronic media- radio broadcasts, television channels and advertising.

Key Expressions: Social Media, democratization, globalization, mass-communication, perception management, crisis-communication, electronic media.

I.TRANSFORMING BUSINESS COMMUNICATION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

This paper aims at highlighting important issues with special focus on the role of Business Communication courses taught by teachers, skills learnt by students especially targeting the electronic media- radio broadcasts, television channels and advertising. The paper will also focus on different aspects of communication we need to keep in mind while video-conferencing.

In this globalised business environment, social media has gained immense popularity with employees today spending significant time at the work place whether inside offices or working from homes. It is perhaps natural that they are fulfilling their need for social interaction through mediated communication. The process of communication has become effective as never before due to the internet and the social networking sites. Effective communication is essentially the key to success of any business. To thrive in the highly competitive business environment, managers need to keep themselves abreast with the latest developments in communication.

The focus of this paper would be on the electronic-media radio, television, advertising, documentary film making etc in relation to business houses and organizations. With the businesses going global, there is shift towards computer mediated communication and for this organizations need not only to possess latest technologically advanced communication equipments but also be familiar with their use and uphold the business ethics. The relation between the skills and competence required in electronic media and social media as a basis of social media marketing is quite evident from the boom in the business market. Global companies have recognized social media marketing platform, utilized them with innovations to power their advertising campaign with social media marketing . Social media is engaging with consumers online.

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) does not come without its challenges, prime among them being the absence of non-verbal cues. The social networking sites have also played a crucial role in bridging all people at a common platform where they can meet like-minded people, find old friends, do business transactions. The focus here would be on yet another form of communication-via television, radio, advertising, video-conferencing, etc. Despite advent of internet and other social networking sites, mass-communication aims at reaching out a wider-section of society even today in a multi-cultural, multi-dimensional and multi-lingual, multi-regional country like India. It attracts the attention of common masses living in the remotest corners of India and hence plays a bigger role in and for the business organizations. For understanding the impact of business communication classes on the business communication in the business world, let us understand the concepts one by one.

II.WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Communication refers to the sharing of ideas in common. Popularly speaking, it refers to the various means or media of transmitting information from one place to another, e.g., telephone, telegraph, television, internet etc.

The word communication is derived from the latin word “communis”, which means “common”. “When we communicate,” says Wibur Schramm, “we are trying to establish a ‘commonness’ with someone”. That is we are trying to share information, an idea or an attitude. Communication takes place when one person transfers

information and understanding to another person. It refers to the exchange of ideas, feelings, emotions, knowledge and information between two or more persons. There is a communication when you talk or listen to someone.

Elements of communication: Communication consists of following elements:

- i. Communicator: is the person who communicates or transmits the message to others. He is also known as sender, issuer and speaker.
- ii. Communicatee: is the person who receives the information. He is also known as receiver or addressee.
- iii. Message: is the subject matter of communication. It is the information intended to be passed on. Messages are passed on through orders, reports, instructions, appeals, views, opinions, suggestions etc.
- iv. Channel: is the medium used to transmit or pass on the message or other signs.
- v. Response: the effect of the information transmitted on the communicatee is known as response. It is the reaction of the receiver to the communication.

III. BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Business communication is the sharing of information between people within and outside the organisation that is performed for the commercial benefit of the organisation. It is the mutual exchange of understanding, originating with the receiver.

IV. MASS-MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

Mass-Media means technology that is intended to reach a mass audience. It is the primary means of communication used to reach the vast majority of the general public. The most common means of mass media are newspapers, magazines, radio, television and the internet. The general masses typically rely on the mass media to provide information regarding political issues, social issues, entertainment, news and current affairs.

Mass media are a mode of social interaction. They facilitate the interaction among individuals, between individuals and institutions, and finally among institutions themselves. The mass media, are, therefore transfer of meanings, customs, beliefs and values. They are the products of social ethos and orders. Mass media influence other cultural institutions and get influenced by them in return. Mass media are supposed to act as agents of social change. Mass media can reinforce, alter, and influence the existing social values and beliefs in a given system. Mass media can also play a role in economic change because the social-structure of a society is somehow linked with its economy.

V. TYPES OF MASS-MEDIA

The communication has always been a part of social development in the process of evolution of man and the developmental process.

Earlier, drum-beating in societies would be a source of mass-communication, sending people from one place to another with messages and later training pigeons for carrying messages--- all form a part of early mass-media.

The mass-media has evolved significantly over time. The newspaper was the original platform for mass media. For a long period of time, the public relied on writers and journalists to provide them with the latest news and

information about social issues. In the 1890's, the radio was invented which superseded the newspaper as the most pertinent source for mass media. Radio became the most famous means of mass-media for the latest news regarding politics, social issues and entertainment.

It was followed by the invention of television which attracted more masses because of its visual impacts in addition to the audio.

Today, the Internet is the most relevant form of mass media and has become a major tool for news outlets. Since, the evolution of the internet, the general public is now able to access any news or information just at the click of a mouse, instead of waiting for the scheduled program.

VI. THE INFLUENCE OF MASS MEDIA/COMMUNICATION MODES

The mass media or communication modes have become an integral part of human civilization and culture. Through mass media, news outlets have a major influence on the general public and a major impact on the public's opinion on certain topics. Human civilizations are moving fast in the phase of existence and survival. Mass media as purveyors of news and views have a decisive role of preparing the human race for newer social roles. Most societies today have become information societies; the rest are on the verge of becoming so. With the growing importance of mass media and communication, the societies are racing against time to be in the mainstream of the communication revolution.

In the past, the process of communication started with travelers and letters. The transformation in European societies following the Renaissance, Reformation and Industrial Revolution resulted in a sea change and the modernization process began spreading to newer areas beyond Europe.

The rapid development of industrialization gave rise to new technologies which were instrumental in bringing about a change in the process of communication. Mass media and communication technologies have become integral parts of our life and society.

Like other institutions, mass media also perform definite functions, the major ones being the supply of news and views, education, entertainment and socialization.

VII. FUNCTIONS OF MASS MEDIA

Some of the important functions of mass media are:

Education: Media are used to add new information to human knowledge and keep on upgrading it. The overall human development is directly related to education. Media enable the spread of education through conventional as well as unconventional methods. An educated or literate person reads newspapers, books, journals, magazines, browses internet for information etc. This increase in consumption of media product is related to their availability and easy access to them.

Economical growth: The increase in media use increases the level of education. The demand for information has boosted the media hardware production causing an unexpected growth in the economy. This, in turn has stimulated the expansion of communications industry including media industries.

Entertainment: The mass media has become an attractive entertainment industry. The entertainment services have been extended and spread across the globe.

Public watchdog: The mass media has also played a leading role in shaping, guiding and reflecting the public opinion. Mass media keeps a watch on all the political, social, economic activities happening across the world.

Information: Mass media itself implies an access to facts and documents which help one acquire information and knowledge. Media organization and communication hardware expand access to information.

VIII.MASS MEDIA APPROACH IN EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

It is very well assumed that the transmission of new ideas through face-to-face communication and through the mass-media can prepare a climate that is useful for accelerating change in the desired direction. Besides bringing about attitudinal and behavioral changes, communication is also expected to impart knowledge of new skills and techniques.

Speaking of the mass-media in the developing societies, one can safely assert that what are described as the 'mass-media' can play a vital role in communicating messages, education and information. But it is for sure, to have established credibility and enthusiasm. Communication by itself cannot fulfill many of its promises unless it is meaningfully integrated with simultaneous efforts in the other key sectors of development.

The credibility of the source of information and the medium itself has first to be established. In the developing societies interpersonal networks of communication continue to be strong. Face-to-face communication carries a considerable volume of messages. In fact, the credibility of this channel is the most well- established and the messages conveyed through the non-traditional mass media invariably require its seal of approval. Today's education is not only mental development of the child or providing bookish knowledge but an over-all development. For this kind of education, technology has played a greater role. The use of audio-visual aids; use of newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and written material for mass-distribution; use of Radio and Television; use of cinema; use of internet; use of satellite educational channels- all has effectively helped in the realization of the objectives of teaching-learning process.

Before 1900, communication was largely face-to-face or mostly oral. Since 1900, communication patterns have changed altogether dramatically in almost all the social situations especially in the field of education. The number of daily newspapers has increased tremendously with an increasing number of pages per edition. Not only this, but the morning, noon, evening weekly and fortnightly editions can be found in a variety of languages and in very good numbers too. The increased number of magazines- all kinds of magazines- knowledge, entertainment, infotainment, hobby, daily need, cookery etc., with attracting features has increased manifold. This is what the business houses need to tap and what our business communication students need to be taught in their communication classes. They need to be trained well in writing and designing business advertisements for all these kinds of written communication channels. The advertisements that would be catchy, enthralling,descriptive, and yet precise. The ads that would just mean business and would fetch business.

Radio is the most significant mass-medium for education. It is very popular to the masses. As a mass-media, radio broadcasting proves a highly economical source of educational instruction.

Television- another popular source of mass-media is the fusion of many means of communicating information. It depicts a synthesis of printed page; the sound impact and the ability to capture motion in film form- finally emerge as a dynamic impact on the viewers. Television directly speaks to the viewer who is actually

participating as an active listener in the ideas or information passed on through the medium of television programmes.

VIII.RADIO AS A MEANS OF MASS-MEDIA

Radio has created a nation of listeners. It is a device with which the whole mass can be contacted at a time, efficiently and economically. Nowadays, with the increase in rural electrification or an access to buy dry cells/ batteries or solar energy run sets, number of radio sets in India is increasing greatly. Radio can be depended upon as an extension tool because it arouses and holds the attention of listeners- young and old who can use and operate it without hassles just tuning into the required frequencies. Radio besides educating, provides recreation and information too.

Speeches of great leaders, experts in various fields, educators etc., can be transmitted to a number of people, in fact, can be approached as it has got a greater appeal.

Broadcasting time in radio is adjusted and mostly kept in view with the availability of the listeners. For e.g., the best time for broadcasts for the rural people is the evening time between 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. as, at this time, majority of them are free to listen. Special broadcast classes on home-making, cookery etc. are usually during mid-day when the homemakers are usually free to listen to the radio. The kid's programmes are usually scheduled on Sundays. A definite schedule about the radio programme is broadcast so that all can catch up keeping their interests and needs in view. The modern school broadcasts are carefully planned audio-learning experiences which utilize resources beyond those available in the usual classroom situations. These broadcasts are usually prepared by excellent teachers and subject experts, so they make possible outstanding and unusual learning experiences.

Through radio broadcasting, a contact is established among the listeners and the renowned authors, educationists, leading scholars and other important personalities, who take part in lectures, talks, discussions, seminars, proceedings etc.

Radio can act as an effective medium of communication for business organisations who could tap in their ads or messages intended for their customers into these slots as per their needs. The business houses could book in for advertisements or sponsor programs as per their requirements to promote their business.

IX.TELEVISION AS A MEANS OF MASS-MEDIA AND A POWERFUL SOURCE OF EDUCATION

Television- another popular source of mass-media is the fusion of many means of communicating information. It depicts a synthesis of printed page; the sound impact and the ability to capture motion in film form- finally emerge as a dynamic impact on the viewers. Television directly speaks to the viewer who is actually participating as an active listener in the ideas or information passed on through the medium of television programmes.

Television has revolutionized the field of instruction. It is a powerful medium of communication that calls for the use of auditory as well as visual senses of the learners in getting educated. Education television programmes can show things that would be otherwise difficult to see, because of the limitations of size, time or distance or that are otherwise, too complex. For example, a surgery taught to medical students conducted at a distance of

say, 3000 kilometers away. It could be difficult to carry all the students so far and would also involve a lot of expenditure.

Television can be the medium by which the students are transported to dangerous inaccessible but important places not feasible for all as field trips. The most common examples can be found while we view programmes telecast on Discovery and National Geographic channel.

History can be effectively taught in school classrooms and then made more explicable by watching TV channels like EPIC, History TV etc. Many valuable programmes are telecast which have an immense educational purpose. It is only when the teacher and the taught know their responsibilities to know about the timings of telecast etc.

Involvement and response are necessary for learning and producers of good programmes take this into account. They work for the participation, either overt or covert. Television has the best potential for business houses too. Apart from training students in business communication, it could also relate with the promoting and marketing business by effectively targeting the audience and communicating the messages intended.

Video- conferencing---a newer medium of mass-communicating and social networking is gaining impetus. An increasingly used CMC (computer mediated communication) technique is video-conferencing. It is the live exchange of information among people, through machines distanced from each other but linked by a telecommunication system. The technique was very expensive earlier and could not be used for routine applications such as telemedicine, distance education or business meetings. Video teleconference systems rapidly evolved in the 90's. During this period IP (Internet Protocol) based video-conferencing became possible, and more efficient technologies were developed permitting desktop or PC-based video-conferencing.

Today we have modern plasma video-conferencing systems available with multiple user interface. The popularity of video conferencing has grown tremendously in recent times due to the increased cost of travel, and more affordable transmission rates. This newer mode of communication has really proven effective in business communication teaching and promoting business hubs.

X.CONCLUSION

Today, it is impossible to separate social media or electronic media from the online world. There is no escaping social media these days, either for individuals or for businesses. Without the media, people in societies would be isolated from the rest of the world. Today, we can't think a day without electronic media in one form or the other. Social media has transformed internal and external business communication, such that it is becoming more democratic, open, and participatory than ever before. The only thing to be kept in mind is how to select the most appropriate message structure, delivery strategy and argument support for the channel .An awareness of the new business rules in the era of social media

Practical Approach (a brief):

The modern business communication classrooms can be rejuvenated by introducing icebreakers involving social media. For e.g., either asking the students to respond to some videos or slips on their screens (if language labs/ computer labs are available) or asking them to make use of their cell-phones for first five minutes in the classroom involving teacher, making a language group where teacher could put up a language question in the

group and make it competitive type activity and seek quick responses. This spending of quality 5-7 minutes making use of social-media would lead the group into an interesting arena of motivated group where learning is achieved to its best. Using authentic teaching materials apart from prescribed course books would also enhance learning and keep the learners in close connection with the facilitator/the teacher. Articles from newspapers, magazines, journals, specific company information like- annual reports, business letters, emails, memos, minutes of the meeting, brochures etc could provide the best supporting material enhancing learner friendly environments.

At last, I would suggest a major reshuffle in the modes of assessment and evaluation of the learners. This would really be a boon to the current teaching-learning scenario. It actually means major reforms in our examination and evaluation systems. For example, while we as language teachers teach business communication students- the oral communication skills developing listening and spoken skills but there is no test or evaluation score in our examination system so far that can check the most active skills of language learning. It keeps the language learning goals distant from the actual targets. The adoption of new strategies and pedagogies involving social media channels etc. for teaching learning would be though a challenging but the most effective one in the present times.

XI.CONCLUDES

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and their implications for business communication should always be kept in mind and followed.

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