

# Imprimis Quarterly

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# Growing with change

**W**e would like to start by thanking all of you for having supported our newsletter 'Rx Ramble' in the past. Many wrote to us to share experiences and insights for which we are grateful.

The communications industry is evolving. Technology is redefining it and opening up a world of opportunities for agencies to expand services and deliver greater value to clients. The new communications techniques of today's world, the web and mail, RSS, blogs and wikis are bringing about radical changes in message delivery and reception. Not to mention, the latest market trends have created a competitive environment (that being an understatement) and the way this affects each industry is different too. It has been our endeavour to be a trusted knowledge partner by monitoring and driving trends that shape the PR and communications industry today and for years to come. This entirely means we need to continually improve our service capabilities. In the last two years, there have been many exciting developments within Imprimis and we look forward to telling you more about them.

We are very excited about re-launching our newsletter. However, in order to cater to our wider audience group it will no longer solely focus on - health care. In the following months, we look forward to bringing you the enhanced Imprimis newsletter which will include the most talked about issues in the field of communications.

Do stay connected!



## Sustainable Development: Today's myth or tomorrow's reality?

**A**ccording to the Webster's New Millennium TM Dictionary of English, sustainable development has been defined as development balancing near-term interests with the protection of the interests of future generations. In other words, sustainable development is a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also in the indefinite future. This term was used by the Brundtland Commission, formally the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), which coined what has now become the most often-quoted definition of sustainable development as development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."



However, the question on most peoples' minds nowadays is whether this very optimistic sounding phrase is actually possible or is it just another modern myth? Is it possible for companies to weave the model of sustainable development into the very fabric of their core business strategy?

There are the naysayers who believe it is not possible, as a business essentially runs to earn profit and so logically will deploy that mode of production which will earn them the most margins currently and hence bear them the highest returns. And this may not always translate into methods which foster sustainable development. However, on the flipside, companies have also begun to realize that in order to survive and thrive in a commercial environment that is becoming increasingly global

in its outlook, it has to factor in the interests of all its stakeholders, taking into account their needs and concerns, right from employees, customers / consumers, suppliers to lawmakers, NGO's, government, the community in which it operates and last but not the least, the ecology.

For many years, charity and philanthropic community development goals were seen separate from business strategy and vision; not fundamental to them. Doing well and doing good were separate pursuits. But as mentioned above, this is changing. Cutting edge innovation and competitive advantage can result from weaving social and environmental considerations into the business strategy to develop the next generation of ideas, access newer markets, retain a motivated and talented workforce, attract more customers / consumers and investors, and above all, maintain a consistent and healthy relationship with all the valuable stakeholders.

In this regard, the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been seen in light of being a subset of sustainable development. In the words of Prerana Langa, Vice President, ICICI Foundation, "CSR is a very important function and it should be run by someone who has the right skill set. It's not only about having a heart, but it's also about having a head." Recently, in a study initiated on CSR to understand from corporates and non-profits their perception of CSR and their motivation to practice it, moral obligation, building a good image / reputation and business sustainability, (in order of importance), emerged as prime drivers for companies to practice corporate social responsibility. This was followed by incentives such as attracting customers as well as gaining a competitive advantage.

One very significant influential motivating factor is the new-age environmentally conscientious consumer. According to Sudhir Sinha, Vice President, Group CSR, Reliance, "Apart from global warming and climate change, another thing which is likely to gain attention and prominence is - consumer activism." Consumers are going to play a major role in deciding whether the products and services of any company are acceptable to them or not. Like it has happened in the past in Europe in the early 1990's - Nike was rejected by the consumers on issues of child labour. Similarly, in this part of the world (Asian countries), you and I will raise questions as to why I should buy this product. Is this product a socially responsible product? Is this product an environmentally responsible product? This is the kind of thing that is going to happen so corporate social responsibility will certainly play a major role in deciding the future of the corporates."

Consequently, 93% of American consumers believe companies have a responsibility to help preserve the environment (2007 Cone Consumer Environmental Survey). Companies are believed to be key players - more than governments and NGO's - in providing leadership on sustainable development over the next ten years, according to a recent Globescan / Sustainability survey of corporations, academics, NGO's and sustainable development experts.

In this regard, a powerful force emerging for positive change within business is the social entrepreneur. Much like their social entrepreneur counterparts, who typically toil on the edge of the mainstream, social entrepreneurs share a vision for the future where business value and societal needs are aligned, where companies are champions of change rather than obstacles to progress.

In practical terms, they are creating and delivering new products, services and business models that not only generate business value, but also address some of society's most pressing challenges, including poverty, climate change and human rights. They compel their host corporations to

look outside their comfort zones - to see both the strategic risks and profound opportunities that exist beyond the purview of traditional business units. It would infact, be an understatement to say that this newly discovered breed of change agent is signaling how markets, business models and technologies will develop in the future.

**Here are a few examples of how social intrapreneurs are pursuing business as unusual:**

- David Berdish of Ford has launched a Megacity Mobility project designed to address transportation needs among swelling urban populations in South Africa, India and Brazil.
- Santiago Gowland is driving sustainability thinking across.
- Unilever's diverse brands. He has pioneered an innovative 'Brand Imprint' assessment to identify and measure social, economic and environmental impacts.
- The company has recently partnered with Rainforest Action Network to certify all of its tea as fair trade.
- Gib Bulloch at Accenture has developed an internal consultancy, Accenture Development Partnerships, which advises citizen sector organisations.



This entity was originally created as a talent recruitment and leadership development opportunity but is increasingly engaging with its corporate clients to create strategies that address sustainability-related challenges. ADP is currently working on the 'Phones for Health Partnership' - a coalition to use wireless technology to track diseases across ten African countries.

It is in context to this current 'aware' economic environment that the importance of the phrase 'triple bottom line' has emerged for corporations. In practical terms, triple bottom line accounting means expanding the traditional reporting framework to take into account environmental and social performance in addition to financial performance. John Elkington, co-founder of the business consultancy SustainAbility, coined this phrase in 1994. It was later expanded and articulated in his 1998 book - Cannibals with Forks: the Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business. It is heartening to know that a growing number of companies have taken a leap of faith to integrate profits, people and the planet into their business planning. The fact is that when businesses balance not only their economic bottom lines, but also consider their social and environmental bottom lines, they identify new opportunities to innovate. Sustained innovation by companies, in turn is the way forward to successfully achieve sustained development.

In the words of John Elkington, and how he thinks attitudes towards sustainability are changing, he said, "The corporate appetite to address real sustainability issues is growing. Even companies like Wal-Mart now use the S-word without blinking. Our own organisation, SustainAbility, is 21 this year and we have never seen such a fierce acceleration in interest in our agenda, with many new actors being attracted into the space."

"We have seen the sustainability agenda in places like the World Economic Forum and the Clinton Global Initiative for some time, but now issues like climate change are jumping this agenda to Prime Ministerial and CEO level, worldwide. Societal and environmental pressures aren't going away, so the net-effect will be to drive these agendas even deeper into companies, with boards finding it increasingly impossible to avoid active, strategic engagement." John also gave a warning for those not joining the movement, "Businesses and countries that find themselves on the wrong side of all of this will suffer profound consequences. It is increasingly clear that history is far from ended." He added, "Fasten your safety belts."

# Quarterly Point Of View

## Is recession getting you down?

It's official: we are in **recession**. The term recession usually has a negative connotation, its equal to being in a crisis, but a crisis, if managed well can lead to victory in the end.

Recessions correct economic imbalances and help the economy get back to a healthy, realistic, and sustainable rate of growth. The 'job' of recession is to clean the 'fat' out of the system, mop up any excess, and pave the way for the next expansion.

There is a plenty of room for creative destruction when the economy is strong - witness the turmoil over the past few years in the music industry, the airlines and the newspaper industry. Recession helps to right economies that have lost touch with reality. Recession can play a painful but a healthy role in the cycles of an economy. It wrings inefficiencies, imbalances, and dangerous levels of risk out of the market.

### Behold the eight **GOOD** things about recession the world over:

#### Filtering

It is argued by some people that a recession can benefit the economy, at least in the long run. The reasoning is, that, falling revenues force firms to become more efficient, for eg, cutting unnecessary costs etc. In a recession, inefficient firms will go out of business and this shake-up is necessary to weed out the inefficient and provide incentives for firms to be as profitable as possible.

#### Boon for open source

Sun Microsystems executives recently were quoted saying, that a widely expected recession in the United States would boost open source, instead of negatively impacting it. They stated that since Sun went pre-dominantly open source, the company has fared much better financially than it did before. Not long ago, it would have been unthinkable to run an entire company of any size on open source software, but that's not true anymore. Enterprise-class database applications such as MySQL, customer relationship management applications such as SplendidCRM, that can compete with paid offerings such as Salesforce.com, and growing numbers of useful, free-on-demand web applications are all combining to make it a

serious proposition for some companies to have software licensing budgets equal to zero or nearly so. The drive to achieve that, for many companies, would be accelerated by a recession.

#### Reduces the gap between rich and poor

Inequality is relatively high in the UK but has remained stable over the past decade, partly because of in-work tax credits and out-of-work benefits. The slump will finally achieve what politicians were too scared to do themselves - cut the historically large gap between the super-rich and working folk.

#### Fair deal for public servants

Teachers, police officers, people in the private sector may envy civil servants. Public spending would be cut, but the public sector will take its time trimming headcounts. Many struggling businesses, by contrast, will have no alternative. Those who keep their public jobs will be benefitting from relatively generous pay terms, set over three years. And some of those accepting redundancy will live off a guaranteed pension on terms well in excess of most private schemes.

#### Saves the planet

Oil prices might have plummeted, but when investment in exploration and refining is cutback, the trend will be upwards. A world in recession will emit less carbon, the 'Great Loft Lagging Leap Forward will begin' and people may save money by choosing to walk and cycle, rather than drive.

#### Rewards the thrift and punishes the profligate

The massive imbalances that underpinned the credit bubble will finally unwind. Saving rates will approach normal levels. Credit cards will be cut up. Houses will be for living and not gambling.

#### Right time to be a customer

The discounts for shoppers are definitely a welcome break. Not only that, the attitude now is more, "When does it suit you, sir?" The sales staff couldn't be nicer and seem genuinely eager to make a sale. "Things are slack," said the sales representative, "it's a good time to be a customer right now." The great Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter thought of recession the way a naturalist might think of forest fires - periodic purges that burn off dead wood and make room for new growth.

# What's India Talking About

## Satyam: corporate governance anyone?

What has happened at, and to Satyam is extraordinary. Extraordinarily bad. This feeling is echoed by millions of people with the Satyam scam now being touted as India's enron. The Satyam fraud is stunningly alarming not only because it is the biggest accounting and auditing fraud in India till date, but also because it directly threatens to engulf the IT sector in India at the time of economic downturn and undermine India's global image as one of the most promising economic stories in the new millennium. While the Ketan Parekh fraud in the late 1990's brought about the collapse of several co-operative banks and the largest

mutual fund in India (Unit Trust of India US-64), which was located right in the middle of the Indian financial system, the Satyam fraud clearly brings out the lacunae in the systems, practices and methods of auditing and accounting in India and situates itself right at the heart of India's booming IT industry.

Logically our next question would be, "What is the key to good Corporate Governance?" At the recently held session of the CII Governance Series 2008-09 organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry in Mumbai, Mr. Deepak Parekh, Chairman HDFC Limited, asserted strong link between risk

management and corporate governance. He stressed on the need for strong emphasis on incorporating an ethical dimension to risk management and remuneration. Setting the context, Mr. Sammy Medora, Executive Director, KPMG, identified board affairs effectiveness, role of independent directors, role of audit committee and performance oversight as corporate governance improvement levers.

According to Mr. N Vittal, former Central Vigilance Commissioner, from his paper, Issues in Corporate Governance in India, "Ultimately, corporate governance is the net result of the individual sense of values, the values held in society or part of a society like professional bodies or business associations and finally the system of public governance. If those who violate the norms are effectively punished then there is a fear and there will be adherence to the principles of corporate governance." He adds, "I was told that in a training program attended by one of the bankers from India, a question was asked, If you are walking alone on a road and find a 10,000

dollar bundle, will you pick it up? 90% said that they would. When the same question was modified slightly, You are walking alone on a road and there is a 10,000 dollar bundle on the road but there is a 10% chance that there is a hidden camera somewhere and there is a 10% chance that the camera may be working, will you now pick up the bundle? 90% said they would not. What we lack in India today, which comes in the way of corporate governance is, there is a feeling that violators first may not be detected and even if detected, they can get away literally with murder. We will therefore have to focus very effectively on creating proper public governance and making changes in the various regulations impinging on the working of an enterprise or a body like the capital market, if we want to usher in an era of better corporate governance in the country."

Sources: ipsnews.net, economicstimes.com, indiatimes.com, Issues of corporate governance in India; paper for publication in the 5th JRD Tata Memorial Lecture Series, authored by Mr. N Mittal

# Citizen Update

## The right to recall MPs: Democratising politics

The people of Chhattisgarh created history on 17th June 2008, when the posts of the Presidents of three local urban bodies fell vacant after voters recalled them. Interestingly, all three presidents were recalled for which elections had been held. This is the surest way of keeping a check on people's representatives. Now, it is for other states and the whole country to follow this example at local, provincial and national levels.

Frazier was the first American governor to be recalled and Ragnvald A. Nestos was elected his successor. Today Constitutions of 18 US states allow recall of state officials. In Venezuela, Article 72 of the 1999 Constitution provides for recall of any elected representative including the President.

The concept of recall is in-built in the concept of representative democracy and has been in practice since the advent of democracy itself. Many political thinkers are of the firm belief that democracy remains incomplete if people are not vested with the power of recall. Lenin remarked: "No elective institution or representative assembly can be regarded as being truly democratic and really representative of the people's will unless the elector's right to recall those elected is accepted and exercised."

This process of recall may be a cumbersome process, or even unworkable, but the present circumstances call for some urgent measures to improve the functioning of our Parliamentary democracy and reinforce the need to strengthen peoples' power which leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) advocated so passionately.

In India, Dr. M.N.Roy was the first to demand the right to recall. In his Draft Constitution of Free India (1944), he advocated that the Indian state was to be organised on the basis of a countrywide network of people's committees, having wide powers such as initiating legislation, expressing opinion on pending bills, recall of representatives and referendum on important national issues.

Globally, the North Dakota Recall of 1921 is quite famous, when Dakota Governor Lynn Frazier was recalled over a dispute about state-owned industries.



Source: <http://cartoonistsatish.blogspot.com>

The Venezuelan recall referendum of August 15, 2004 was held to determine whether President Hugo Chavez should be recalled from office. It was the first such recall vote ever faced by any democratically elected head of the state in the world.

In India, though there have been demands for this right from the pre-independence days and the matter was discussed even in the Constituent Assembly, there has been no serious effort to make a provision for it. Now, when MP's and MLA's are behaving in a highly irresponsible manner there is again a demand to enact this right. MLA's or MP's are facing trial in murder and rape cases but people do not have the power to recall them.

More recently, Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee, while addressing the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, suggested that voters should be in a position to demand the recall of their representatives before the expiry of their term, by presenting a petition to a designated authority. He called for the introduction in India of a constitutional device that would provide the right to recall Members of Parliament if they are found to be "incompetent,

insensitive, corrupt or indifferent to the duties, or indulge in activities unbecoming that of a Member of Parliament both inside and outside."

It would be sufficient to conclude by saying that, "A nation makes a Constitution, but a Constitution cannot make a nation."

# Brands to Bollywood:

## The new b2b

Acknowledging the impact of popular films and iconic stars since the 1940's and 50's on style, trends and ideologies; companies in India are now using the powerful medium of in-film and television advertising for product placement and brand endorsement. This phenomenon of in-film and TV advertising is helping to build brands and proving to be a revenue-spinner for all parties concerned. Our article explores this hugely popular trend and its meteoric rise.

Appealing to the rising affluence of Indian audiences, branded goods now constantly appear in films and daily soaps. Realising the potential of celebrity endorsements and the advantages of in-film placements, the corporate world views movies as the optimum medium for building brands. Equally, the film industry is happy to accommodate in-film advertising as it serves to defray production costs, as well as the costs of marketing and promoting films. This trend which is likely to grow even more, encourages consumerism through consumption in a growing market economy.

Interestingly, there is growing evidence of shortened attention span of consumers and hence, a greater effort by companies to break through the clutter of multitudinous brands and media vehicles. The best way to deliver the message is to catch the customer off-guard when the rational defenses are down, and the best way to do this is to use the emotional gate rather than the rational gate. The rational gate examines the advantages, benefits, and features and seeks value for money while the emotional gate is all about trust, love, identification and belief. And of course, it has been noticed that films and television operate at the emotional level.

It is no wonder then that corporates are using this outlet extensively to advertise and showcase their products. Recall the Rishi Kapoor - Dimple Kapadia teen romance Bobby, way back in 1973. The Rajdoot motorbike in the film became an instant rage with the nation's bedazzled youth and they started calling it the 'Bobby.'

Of more recent vintage, is Kaun Banega Crorepati on Star Plus, that had the iconic host Amitabh Bachchan handing over ICICI bank cheques to the winners. And there lies the hidden reality. Which is that though the Indian entertainment industry appears to have only recently woken up to the concept of branded entertainment, it's been around a lot longer than many are aware. Starting with DeBeers draping divas in sparkling diamonds in the early 1940s, product placement in movies has always been a subtle art - the art of inconspicuously piggybacking on the story thread and connecting with the audiences' mind. It still is an art - but no longer subtle. From cars and cell phones, to mouth-fresheners and branded tea, our heroes and heroines are the ultimate consumers.

According to industry estimates compiled by Media e2e, the direct product placement market in India (which also includes branded entertainment) in 2005 was pegged at Rs 700 million and touched Rs 935 million last year. The base of overall product placements in television has improved from 1.3% last year to 1.6% this year. In the late 1990's, Karan Johar's brand of slick urban filmmaking - as opposed to Sooraj Barjatya's outlandish costumes in Hum Aapke Hain Koun, introduced Indian audiences to brands such as DKNY and Polo Sport in Kuch Kuch Hota Hai.

Mid-2000's, saw Amitabh Bachchan walk out of an airport in Ek Ajnabee, carrying a Louis Vuitton briefcase. Saif Ali Khan looked suave with a Louis Vuitton bag in Kal Ho Na Ho and Calvin Klein chaddis in Salaam Namaste. As

mass films get more luxury-brand conscious, it is no longer uncommon to see the camera lingering longingly on the Moet and Chandon label like in Sanjay Gupta's Zinda. Priety Zinta in Von Dutch hotpants in Salaam Namaste or Abhishek Bachchan in his Breitling watch in BluffMaster, have drawn major attention.

Except now, as more brands bombard the market, it is a two-way traffic. It's not just the stylist going to Hong Kong to pick up foreign brands to make his actor seem slicker, as in the days of Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, but also the brand actively seeking out films that will suit their profile.

For example, months before Christian Dior announced their entry in India. Their representatives were in Mumbai searching for product placement opportunities in Bollywood. From being just a tactical one-off activity, companies are clearly making branded entertainment an integral part of their marketing strategy.

Bollywood, has discovered branding in a big way. In 2006, according to industry estimates, brand cameos earned around Rs 80 crore, and as a result, even small and medium-budget movies as well as animated films are now hoping to cash in on this new and lucrative revenue stream. Indeed, media analysts and industry watchers predicted figures of Rs 200 crore for 2008, to reach Rs 800 crore in 2010. Some years ago, Farhan Akhtar's Don promoted Tag Heuer watches, Motorola, Garnier, Citibank and, of course, Oakley sunglasses as well as Louis Philippe outfits. Dhoom2 promoted Coke, Pennzoil, Pepe, Sony, the Disney channel, Sugar Free, McDonalds, Speed, and Suzuki Zeus while Lage Raho Munnabhai featured World space, IOCL, Go Air, MSN, Good Day, Kurkure, Bright Outdoor and Reliance Communications.

### So let's list down some of the more obvious advantages of film placements:

- **Big stars at a fraction of the costs**
- **Films transcend geography, class and culture barriers, clutter-free environment**
- **Not subject to surfing, zipping or muting (unlike in TV and other media)**
- **Catches people in a receptive mood (remember the emotional gate?)**
- **Target-specific**
- **Opportunities for cross and joint promotions**

**These aspects have been leveraged by brands such as Coke, Pepsi, Lux, Airtel, Hyundai, Bagpiper, wherein movies and brands flash identical messages at their target audiences. After 2006's success story, more FMCG brands and durables have woken up to the power of movies as a means to push their products. Companies are increasingly opting for joint promotions.**

For UTV's Goal, Reebok worked closely with the film's costume designer to create outfits for the cast. Reebok India already sponsors top soccer clubs in India like East Bengal, Mohun Bagan, and Mohammedan Sporting and the theme of Goal revolves round soccer.

Additionally, UTV also used Reebok's retail outlets to advertise the movie. "Unlike most associations today where a brand is a force fit or an afterthought; this was a strategic and seamless association between the brand and the film," says Vinit Karnik, Senior Director - entertainment, Broad-Mind. Although there is no fixed formula, but the factors that are usually taken into consideration during the negotiation stage include - cast and credits, size of the projects and the producers involved, timing of the release, brand impact, number of screens during release and post-release phase, and possibilities of brand associations through contests and promotions. Depending on the content of the film and its storyline, the agency sketches the likely profile of viewers who would flock to see the



site, placing.com, "Just as most of us spend more time with our co-workers than our families, it's even more true that we spend more time with products than with people - and the relationship we build around these products are worthy of attention. It's the interaction between the product and the person that we call placing."

movie. Next the agency approaches all those brands that could appeal to the targeted viewers. This is followed by a 360 degree marketing plan for cross-promotions during the various stages of a film's release.

Marketers think, "Pay once, and keep reaping the benefits at every show of the movie, across the country, or every time people get together and rent a CD / DVD, or every time it's broadcast on television, for years to come. Producers save money, without hurting their content. Ad agencies get to promote and build brands effectively. It's a win-win situation for all. The dawn of placing is here. To quote from the

# The New Face of PR and Communications

In recent years, more and more industries, ranging from auto-manufacturing to financial services, from consumer packaged goods to entertainment services have reached the same decisive conclusion - PR works. And at times, PR works better than other forms of marketing and at a small fraction of the cost. Now even though public relations is a multi-million dollar industry today, professional communicators have been using PR to deliver value for decades. However, what's new today is the changing face of public relations.

But what is exactly happening? Well, what's happening is a transformation in the media business, an evolution in the PR and communications industry, and a slow but sure technology induced shift in the mediums used by a corporate to communicate with its audiences and stakeholders.

Throughout the history of marketing and communications, traditional media has played a central role of delivering information, whether paid for or not. Whether the medium was an eighteenth-century newspaper, a nineteenth-century magazine, a twentieth-century radio and television or twenty first-century internet; the symbiosis between media and marketing has been, and is inextricable. But the media environment is in a state of constant change. Traditional media is being replaced by a host of contemporary new media channels. Channels that are more participatory in nature that allow for interaction between and amongst the targeted milieu. This rings in the sounds of a whole new era in the PR and communications industry, thus nudging companies to start looking at alternative modes and instruments to connect with their publics.

On the positive side, with this change comes opportunity - the opportunity for a corporate to interface and interplay with its publics in a brand-new way. The opportunity to use these new platforms to not only market itself in a transparent and coherent manner but also to safeguard its corporate reputation and use PR strategies effectively during crisis. We know that public relations essentially deals with the practice of managing the flow of information between an organisation and its publics. It deals with the art of communication. Now let's have a look at some of the new and increasingly popular communication and interface mediums available to a corporate in today's fast paced globalised economy.

### Social Media

The advent of social media is the most pre-eminent trend in PR today and consists primarily of internet and mobile-based tools for sharing and discussing information among people. Social media is distinct from industrial media, such as newspapers, television, and films.

While social media uses relatively cheap tools that enable anyone (even private individuals) to publish or access information, industrial media are relatively expensive tools that require significant capital to publish information. Among the primary commentators on the convergence of traditional and social media in PR is Brian Solis, who coined the term 'PR 2.0' in 1993. According to Lloyd Salmons, (first chairman of the Internet Advertising Bureau social media council) "Social media isn't just about big networks like Facebook and MySpace, it's about brands having conversations." Some examples of social media software applications include:

### Communication

- Blogs: Wordpress, Blogger, Live journal, Typepad
- Microblogs / presence apps: Twitter, Pownce and Jaiku
- Social networking: Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Orkut
- Social network aggregation: FriendFeed, Youmeo
- Events: Upcoming, Eventful, Meetup
- Wikis: Wikipedia, PBwiki, Wetpaint
- Social bookmarking : Delicious, StumbleUpon
- Social news sites: Digg, Mixx, Reddit
- Opinion sites: epinions, Yelp
- Photo sharing: Flickr, Picasa, Photobucket
- Video sharing: YouTube, Vimeo
- Livecasting: Ustream, Justin, Mogulus
- Audio and music sharing: imeem, The Hype Machine
- Virtual world: Second Life, The Sims Online
- Online gaming: World of Warcraft, Everquest, Age of Conan
- Game sharing: Miniclip

At this point, it would be wise to delve into the nature and features of few of the above mentioned social media applications.

### Blogs

Blogging has become a huge form of media, popular through the internet. Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject while some function as more personal online diaries. Although there are many different types of corporate blogs, most can be categorised as either external or internal. Blogs are either used internally - to enhance the communication and culture in a corporation or externally for marketing, branding or public relations purposes, called corporate blogs.

The advantage of blogs is that posts and comments are easy to reach and follow due to centralised hosting and generally structured conversation threads. Market research done in the first half of 2006 indicated that 34% of large companies had established weblogs. Another 35% planned to do so by the end of 2006, thus bringing the total to nearly 70%. In fact more than 12% of the Fortune 500 companies blog externally. The benefits are that blogs have lower over-head costs than traditional media and are often said to provide better news coverage and analysis. They also provide a direct and transparent platform for corporates to interface with their publics and vice-versa. Consequently, blogs are increasingly sprouting to replace traditional media with a more sustainable low-cost business model and are gaining more of a following.

## About Imprimis

Imprimis has been known for its unconventional approach while transforming ideas in to actions. This ensures that as we grow, we don't lose our unique edge. Our one-of-a-kind structure allows us to provide the best people for a client's needs and give us the flexibility to get the job done. With operations across 20 cities through 12 fully-owned offices, Imprimis offers a host of integrated communications services including corporate image counsel, media relations, investor relations, crisis communications, event management, content development and public affairs.

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### RSS

RSS (Rich Site Summary) is a format for delivering regularly changing web content. It is a family of Web feed formats used to publish frequently updated works - such as blog entries, news headlines, audio, and video - in a standardised format. You save time by not needing to visit each site individually. You ensure your privacy, by not needing to join each site's email newsletter. Understandably, the number of sites offering RSS feeds is growing rapidly and includes big names like Yahoo News.

Social media releases, search engine optimisation, content publishing, and the introduction of podcasts and video are other burgeoning trends. Interestingly, more than eight of ten business journalists (84%) say they have used or would use blogs as primary or secondary sources for articles, according to the 2007 Arketi Web Watch. The Survey, 'Inside B-to-B Media Usage of Web 2.0' by marketing consultancy Arketi Group.

Currently, Chief Marketing Officers view the most important media for meeting marketing objectives as conferences and events, consumer / business magazines, TV and trade magazines. In contrast, a year from now, they anticipate that the top four most important media will be conferences and events, TV, online content sites and consumer / business magazines. This reflects the growing influence of online media. (The research is based on a global survey of 263 marketing executives conducted in February 2008. Respondents hailed from nearly 20 industries and their organizations had annual revenue of \$500 million or more.)

The clear conclusion is that the growing popularity of interactive tools such as wikis, blogs and social networks is giving customers the ability to engage with firms like never before, and global marketers need to put customers at the center of their operations to respond to this new and challenging reality. Secondly, both the interactive nature of Web 2.0 technologies and the transparency of corporate messages among different constituencies require the integration of various forms of marketing and communications. Hence, the need of the hour is to integrate marketing with other corporate communications. Thirdly, CMO's need to adopt new media. Infact, organisations should consider setting aside a specific budget for experimenting with the newest Web 2.0 technologies.

At this point, it would be safe to end by saying that the new face of PR and Communications is definitely emerging. We can already see the silhouette. In the upcoming newsletters, we would be hosting articles and insights from business and communication experts, featuring the news trends and techniques in this field today.