

## REDEFINING PUBLIC RELATIONS

The practice of public relations has picked up a consideration amount of negative spin in recent times but **Jacqueline Yeo** sets the record straight with her exposé on the business.

By Jacqueline Yeo

**Public Relations (PR) or corporate** communications enables an organisation to manage and integrate communications internally and externally using a wide range of management strategies, and by tapping on a variety of specialist disciplines within the profession.

PR isn't a one-way street and it cannot operate in a silo. Instead, it is a vital part of an organisation's marketing arsenal. Cindy Payne, managing director, Asia Pacific Connections says, "In our experience, when clients integrate their public relations activities with other marketing vehicles under one campaign umbrella, objectives are more aligned and messaging more consistent – maximising influence over customer spend and driving bottom line results.

PR is often misunderstood to be publicity, and is there only for the purpose of generating media attention. Some even refer to PR as a 'marcom song and dance'. PR is actually an umbrella term for a range of communication activities including community relations, customer relations, consumer affairs, promotions, employee relations, international relations, issues and crisis management, media relations, publicity, shareholder relations, investor relations, analyst relations, and speech writing. Some of these functions overlap, but is often distinguished, relative to the type of stakeholders being addressed by an organisation and business objectives it seeks to achieve.

At Yahoo, global communications efforts include overseeing functions such as media relations, policy communications, internal communications, product promotion and corporate reputation management. The company's chief communications officer, Jill Nash, who reports to CEO Terry Semel, is the top



The successful Xbox 360 launch by Edelman PR

communications advisor to the executive team and guides the global relations team. In local markets, managing directors or country directors are also heavily involved in the development process and execution of PR strategy. "Yahoo has a centralised PR structure in SEA-sia, that helps ensure reliable and consistent communications from corporate headquarters to the various stakeholders we communicate with on a daily basis", Jason Coates, communications manager, Yahoo SE Asia says.

With Nokia, its various corporate communications teams are responsible for all communication activities in their respective geographical areas with close management interaction in

line with the company's principles and guidelines. "Communications is one of the key pillars that drives Nokia's leadership. Nokia communicates the right messages to its stakeholders to build and maintain strong relationships between press members, analysts, investors and employees", Wong Ai Fong, communications director, Asia Pacific, Nokia says.

"Different target audiences have different needs, and the corporate communications function plays a strategic role in identifying messages specific to each audience." This, she adds must be seamlessly delivered and at Nokia, corporate communication function heads work closely with senior management

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