ELETRONUCLEAR’S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BRAZILIAN MEDIA: TRANSPARENCY AND CREDIBILITY

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ABSTRACT

In a capitalist economy the most valued assets are not money, shares or facilities, but credibility. Lack of money can ruin a company, but often it is reputation that delivers the final blow. It has become challenging to safeguard reputation in a world where Communication is increasingly connected and with such an intense and lightning fast flow of information. This is particularly true for the electricity sector – a commodity so prevalent in everyday modern life, but, whose business dealings, are hardly known by the general public. When it comes to nuclear energy, the challenge of establishing an effective Communication with transparency and credibility touches on even more complex elements. The topic of this paper is the scenario through which the Communication process, along with its characteristics and approaches, unfolds between the nuclear sector and the Brazilian media.

1. INTRODUCTION

Reputation as the most valued asset in a capitalist economy is the outcome of a poll conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit/The Economist and commented in Brazil by FSB Comunicações where most of those interviewed (52% of 269 senior executives) agreed that reputation constitutes an asset of essential value for their organizations and 84% “that risks in this area have been growing in the past few years”.

The Worldwatch Institute, in its latest bulletin (2013) published the article “Nuclear Power’s Uncertain Future” where it asserts that “about 67 nuclear reactors with a capacity of 64.3 GW are under construction in the planet, despite the shutdown of construction work on 7 of them for over 20 years.”

According to a Gallup poll conducted in 47 countries before the Fukushima accident, 57% of those interviewed were in favor of nuclear energy and 32% against. Soon after, on April 19, 2011, 49% were in favor and 43% against. A BBC poll carried out in 12 countries (including Brazil) between July and September 2011 (following the Fukushima accident) showed that 39% were in favor of using nuclear energy through existing plants, but that other plants should not be built; 30% said it was dangerous and that plants in operation should be closed as soon as possible; and 22% that it was relatively safe and that more plants should be built. According to Worldwatch, some of the reasons behind the sector’s stagnation are: cost of nuclear energy; repercussions of the accidents at Chernobyl, Fukushima and Three Mile Island and public opinion opposition.
The company’s reputation is directly linked to the adequate treatment given to the demand created by the public. Whether they are opinion setters or regular customers. They are essential for the establishment of a strategic communication aligned with the business. Medium- and long-term planning is capable of acting in a preventive manner and of improving Communication in times of crisis. By anticipating events, tarnishing of the image can be prevented and rectified.

Francisco Viana states that “Image, like the word, can be what it is and what it isn’t, reciprocally. What seems to be may not be what it is, warned Plato… Actually, it does mean the point of view of the corporation about itself, expressed in its Communications. For the image to be consistent, it is essential for the company’s identity to be consistent, not only in visual symbols, but when engaged in its relations…”

Charles Fombrun, of the Reputation Institute, defines reputation as the sum of images that the various stakeholders have regarding the organization. Other authors such as John Dorley and Fred Garcia add: the sum of images represent the sum of performance, behavior and Communication. For Mario Rosa, image is the picture that an individual or a certain group has of the organization arising from information and interactions. The consolidation of these images over time builds reputation. The Reputation Institute states that it works like a magnet by attracting talent, investors and new consumers, retaining current ones, besides reducing raising, capital and financing costs, motivating employees and creating press coverage.

Changes to the economic and business environment have been leading most managers to face the reputation risk as a critical matter, like a problem that requires specific and unique solutions. “Reputation risk and image is the starting point for all risks”, states Guruswami Raghavan, of the SDM Institute for Management Development, in Mysore, India. “If you don’t have a reputation, you have no business.”

Media relations, especially in Brazil, is one of the main areas of Strategic Communications within a company. It is one of the basic tools to build a good image and, ultimately, to strengthen its reputation. Brazilian media today, operating with multiple facets (printed, radio, television and online), is a powerful opinion setter. An efficient Business Communications has the ability to act proactively in the day-to-day with the media, and, therefore, to prepare a favorable environment to face crises.

This paper will present how Eletronuclear manages Media Relations

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The different media

With the advent of online media, printed newspapers, radio and television have been undergoing great transformations. According to journalist Merval Pereira, O Globo newspaper columnist and member of the Brazilian Literary Academy, “In Brazil, there is a love and hate relationship typical of a country that still tests the solidity of its democratic institutions, and where the justice system does not function properly.” The journalist goes on to say that, “here the press, more than in other places, becomes a Branch of Government, due
to a dysfunction of the other Branches.” He adds: “An attempt to discredit the means of communication is disseminated by government supporters in the supposition that “public opinion” only represents the elite of society and not the citizens in general. ‘Public opinion’ emerged at the end of the 18th century, primarily through diffusion of the press, as a form of the incipient civil society to oppose the power of the absolutist State and to legitimize their demands in the political arena. Not surprisingly, therefore, the rise of “public opinion” is linked to the rise of the modern State.” In defense of the big press, Merval states: “There is no doubt that, with the emergence of new technologies, newspapers have lost the hegemony over information, but they continue to be essential factors for citizenship.”

Studies by PQ Mídia, based on the Global Consumer Spending on Digital Media Content & Technology Forecast 2013-17, which tracked media and advertising trends in the digital environment, state that global expenditure of consumers on technology and digital media content in the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) reported the fastest growth rates, led by Russia, followed by Brazil. According to the researchers, the expansion this year comes on the heels of the generalized adoption of smartphones, growing access to broadband internet, expansion of the middle class in emerging markets such as in Brazil, India and China, and the large-scale consumption of rich media by consumers of the X and Y generations in mature markets.

On the other hand, a study conducted by KPMG International found that Brazilian consumers are still more inclined to use more traditional media than digital ones. The poll was conducted in 8 countries and revealed an interesting fact: Brazilians spent the most on traditional media, reporting an average of 15 dollars a month (versus an average of 12 dollars for the USA and Canada). As for expenditures with digital media, Brazil ranked second, behind China, with considerably less spent on digital media (6 dollars a month) than on traditional ones. Brazilians spent less time watching television and more time listening to the radio. As for online media, all countries had roughly the same average of time spent, with highlight to Brazil, which ranked first in access to social network and news sites. The activity most performed by Brazilians was TV watching and accessing the internet to navigate social network sites through a PC or laptop with 57% of responses. Then came listening to the radio and accessing the internet for reasons other than to interact with social network sites, using a PC or laptop, with 39% and, in third place, 37% watch TV at the same time that they access a social network site.

Eletronuclear Media Relations Department

The Eletronuclear Media Relations Department is directly linked to the President of the company. The Socioenvironmental Responsibility Coordination is responsible for managing the Internal Communications, advertising agency, and the sponsorship and events department.

Strategic planning

Based on polls conducted on the daily clipping and among journalists and communicators, goals are laid out, and objectives and indicators are established, according to the Eletrobras Strategic Planning and the Eletronuclear Strategic Positioning. It is also the time to establish the key messages that will be used during the period and to set up the Plan of Action.
Day-by-day in the company

Internal matters of the company and news broadcast in the media provide the “temperature” for the day’s work. In times of crises (internal or external) or in situations that may lead to a crisis it is time for reactive actions and, in times of “peace”, for proactive actions, especially by interacting with communicators. Indispensable tools for the day-by-day include: Ready Response Guide; Press Room; video releases and interactive releases. For the smooth running of Media Relations, Internal Communications needs to flow accordingly and company information needs to reach the team.

Training sessions

From time to time company spokespeople receive media training and undergo simulations that not only help to prepare a statement (with the key messages) during an interview, but also for lectures.

The interview

Planning is essential in order to give a good interview. The preparation of mental cues, key messages, highlight of relevant information and, depending on the case and time, even simulations are carried out. During the interview, the interviewee is trained to sound somewhat convincing; have conviction, be secure, have knowledge of the subject matter; employ key messages; have empathy, be available; be serene and calm. Furthermore, the interviewee is taught to deliver credibility through verbal and body language and postural expressions. Be clear, fluent; perceive the client and scenario; and manage time. After the interview, the team of Eletronuclear journalists perform an evaluation.

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1. The results of the Media Relations work that is being conducted by Eletronuclear can be evaluated by the result of the poll conducted in 2012 by Ideafix with 80 journalists (most of which - 69.3% - are from strategic profile outlets). The poll indicated that:

- Eletronuclear is the 3rd most remembered company of the Eletrobras Group;
- 45.3% know Eletronuclear well;
- 57.3% are highly interested in the nuclear question;
- 60% consider nuclear energy to be clean;
- 93.5% consider information received from the company to be reliable;
- 88% believe nuclear energy contributes to the country’s development.

3.2. The strategic plan which is being applied in Eletronuclear Media Relations Department includes, among others, the following activities in order to optimize the described results:

- Promotion of workshops and seminars dedicated to specialized media;
- Improvement of relationship between internal technical personnel with the appropriate media;
- Establishment of a national award to recognize the journalism students which had prepared outstanding articles and papers about the nuclear area.

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REFERENCES