

Communication and Public Relations

Basics

- There are broadly 2 types of communication:
 - ✓ Internal- With GBC members, employees, devotees, etc.
 - ✓ External- Life members, media persons, donors, etc.
- The goal is to spread the message of Krishna Consciousness across all spheres and among the masses.
- It is always easy to start a relationship but the maintaining it requires all the effort.
- Reciprocation plays a key role in maintaining relationships. Receiving and accepting gifts in the form of prasadam, communication and exchange of loving words goes a long way in building long lasting relationships.

Action Plan

- Once contact is established with a person, attention is given to invite the person to the temple along with his family. The idea is to give him darshan of the Lord, give him Chappan Bhog or Rajbhog prasadam and some SP books so as to make the moment memorable.
- It is important for the temple management to establish and maintain contacts with officials in the political sphere, police department and the municipality to ensure smooth operation of day to day activities so as to mitigate problems caused to due to sabotage or other external factors.
- Temples situated in the capital cities must establish and maintain contacts with the Chief Ministers of respective State and other high top cadre officials as this goes a long way in spreading awareness about ISKCON's activities.
- Effective communication played a huge role in spreading awareness about ISKCON's 50th anniversary. It also included a letter acknowledging achievements of ISKCON by Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi.

Strategy

- 'What Sells is What You See'. There is a lot of scope for spreading awareness through social media platforms. The PR team should strive to be more creative. Print media also plays a key role and PR team must maintain cordial relations with media persons.
- When it comes to print media, maintain relations right from the photo editor, editor-in-chief to the CEO is essential for spreading awareness and getting effective coverage. Relations are vital in damage control, at the time of sabotage attacks and to save from wrong publicity which could dent ISKCON's image.
- Presentation is of prime importance while communicating. The PR personnel must know 'How to talk'. In the public arena, language should be simple so as to appeal to all classes of people receiving it.
- When meeting big people, there usually is very less time. Communication must be effective so as to reach the heart of the desired person and stay connected with him.

Hierarchy and Work Structure

- A Public Relations (PR) team requires atleast 4 members- 2 members for field work and 2 for office work. Visiting people at homes or offices is necessary in maintaining relationships.

- The PR team must be trained in social media communication, letter drafting and making phone calls to invite people to temple.
- In the present social media age, it is important to stay updated on all platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. Dedicated workforce is required to update temple activities and functions on social media platforms.
- Team work and proactive behavior is key in successful communications and management as important meetings can happen at any time. The PR teams must always be on their toes.
- Having a trustworthy team is important as there are many confidential correspondences that happen and employees cannot be entrusted entirely with this responsibility. Resident devotees are required who can devote full time to this department as events and meetings can come up at any time for which we have to always be ready.
- It is also important to have a budget in place which keeps a record of all expenses to be incurred for the paraphernalia (eg. Prasad, gifts, etc.) , conveyance, etc. so that a specific amount of money is allotted to this department.

Lessons

- 4 important qualities for a successful communications are:
 - ✓ Courage
 - ✓ Patience
 - ✓ Determination
 - ✓ Enthusiasm

There are times when we are blankly rejected. The only way is to tolerate the rejections. Srila Prabhupada(SP) always said that we shouldn't lose hope and keep trying.

- SP is the best example of an excellent communicator. He would easily connect with one and all and also spread the message that would appeal to them.
- It is also important to be honest and have a clean character. One must be careful in carrying oneself in public as we are representing ISKCON and any wrong deed will give the organization a bad name.
- Devotee must always be alert and must be on the lookout for the right opportunity to spread the message. As we meet different people on a daily basis, maintaining a proper etiquette is important.
- Other key factors to successful PR are:
 - ✓ Cleanliness
 - ✓ Dressing-up well
 - ✓ Type of conveyance used for meeting dignitaries.

Challenges

- There are diverse types of people- some of them not very supportive. Different methods must be employed to reach their hearts and convince them. SP said that the word impossible exists only in the books of fools.
- It is also important to clear misunderstandings of people having a negative picture about ISKCON through the right channel

Key Success Factors

- Spiritual strength the impetus for enthusiasm. Devotees must be humble while approaching people.
- The principle of 'Praise Publicly, Chastise Privately' must be followed.
- Remembering special dates (birthdays, anniversaries, etc.) and exchanging gifts with people on those dates goes a long way in building meaningful relationships as people like appreciation and praises