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INLINE

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WEBER SHANDWICK



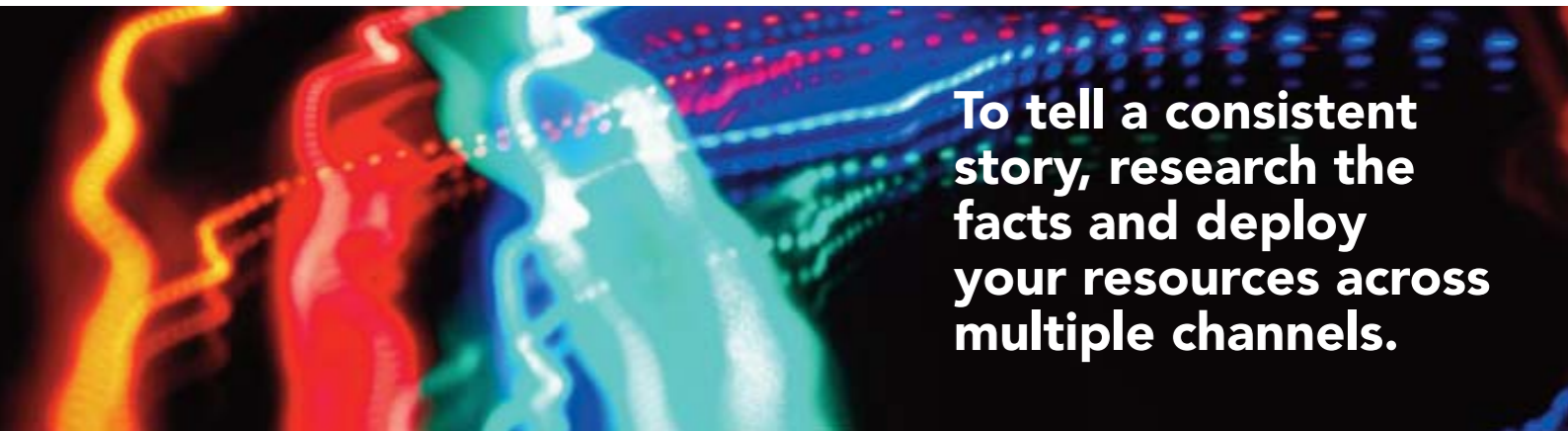
Welcome to the Winter edition of our PR insights newsletter, drawing on the views and experience of the 'International Consultancy of the Year' (UK PRWeek and the UK Public Relations Consultants Association – don't just take my word for it!).

In this edition we cover recession, reputation and litigation, with a detour to South Africa via digital media mythology, global consumer marketing trends and clean technology marketing.

Let me just say a quick but meaningful 'thank-you' to all our clients, staff and friends who have helped make this such an amazing award-winning year for Weber Shandwick, in Europe and beyond. We appreciate it and never forget that it is you that matters.



Know what you don't know.



To tell a consistent story, research the facts and deploy your resources across multiple channels.

Digital. Yay! It's the public relations industry's Holy Grail, silver bullet, saving grace and a whole lot more besides, right? Well, no. Digital undoubtedly is a fantastic tool for PR professionals to do what we do best: tell stories. But digital alone won't do the job for you. If you want to most effectively tell a consistent story you need to deploy your resources across a variety of channels to reach your audience.

When planning campaigns and assembling the channels to best reach your audience, PR often relies too much on intuition. We must embrace planning and cosy-up to data. To try to right this wrong, Weber Shandwick surveyed almost 5,000 European consumers as part of its INLINE Communications research into how people are truly influenced. We asked a representative sample of European consumers over the age of 18 the question: 'When considering purchasing goods or services in general, how influential are the following sources of information in helping you make your purchase decision?'

The results enabled us to challenge many of the myths surrounding media and influence. For the purposes of this article, I will focus on the UK data (sample of 1,007 adults). The first finding was that online advocacy was cited as being the most influential source of product/service information for UK consumers. By online advocacy we mean 'user reviews and recommendations from people online you do not know'.

So, digital is 'where it's at' and we can abandon the more traditional elements of communications, right? Wrong. While UK consumers claimed that online channels were most influential on their purchase decisions, 43 per cent also stated they often didn't believe what they read online until they had checked the facts in the traditional mainstream media. So while online is clearly a critical channel for storytelling, not backing up that story with activity in traditional media to validate that story is missing a huge opportunity. We call the need to create consistent stories across a variety of media 'INLINE Communications'.

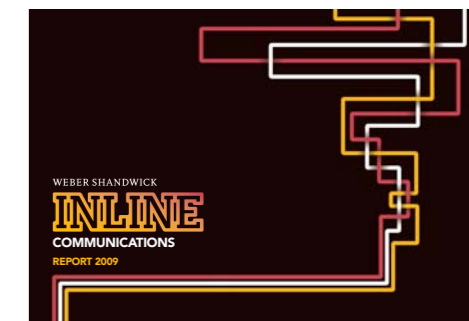
Some more misconceptions. Young consumers don't read traditional media, right? Wrong. Exactly half of UK consumers under the age of 35 believed magazines and newspapers to be influential. Of UK consumers over 45, only 29 per cent made the same claim. In fact, younger consumers are far more likely than their more elderly compatriots to find all sources of information influential. But the myth that the media isn't the best way to reach young adults in the UK must be destroyed.

Some commonly held beliefs do seem to hold up, however. Attitudes to brand engagement within social networking sites (such as Facebook and Bebo) by UK consumers differ markedly by age group. Almost half (49 per cent) of those aged 18 to 24 said they would be interested in interacting with their favourite brands within these online communities. Perhaps unsurprisingly, only 15 per cent of the over-45s were interested in the same thing.

But to further confuse matters, while young UK consumers are far more predisposed to interacting with brands within social media, they are just as likely as the over-45s not to believe what they read online until they check the facts in the mainstream traditional media – 43 per cent of 18- to 24-year-olds agreed they often didn't believe what they read online until they had checked it out in the mainstream media, compared with 45 per cent of the over-45s.

What does this tell us? That organisations need to tell a consistent story across a variety of channels in order to most effectively reach the audience they are trying to influence. And in doing so, they need to challenge preconceptions and embrace fact.

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View the 2009 INLINE Communications Report and supporting podcast [here](#).



Emerging from the recession?



GRIN stands for Genetics, Robotics, Internet and Nanotechnology, and the big beast for us is the 'I'.

Whether we are truly emerging from the recession, and how quickly, is still a moot point. But with confidence gradually returning to marketing, we in the public relations industry have to rethink some of our strategies and assumptions if we are going to be able to help take full advantage of the recovery.

Recent trends, such as the rise of consumer scepticism about traditional advertising and the power that the Internet has given to advocates and badvocates, have all helped build the power and reputation of PR in today's marketing mix. As the recent VSS Communications Industry Forecast has noted, the communications industry is expected to grow faster than GDP for the next five years, and one of the key drivers of this growth is the PR industry.

So, despite the downturn, the fact is that PR's time has come! But the challenges and opportunities ahead are increasingly complex. We must ensure that we truly understand the ways the world is changing and use it to our advantage. That means a focus on strategic planning and a rethink of some current assumptions on media consumption.

In *'Future Files – The 5 trends that will shape the next 50 years'*, Richard Watson summarises these trends as:

1. Ageing
2. The power shift Eastwards
3. Global connectivity
4. The Environment
5. GRIN technologies

Let's start with the implications of ageing. In the U.S. someone turns 50 every eight seconds, whilst in Japan the 75+ population is forecast to rise by over 30 per cent by 2025 therefore the opportunities in healthcare, technology, tourism, financial services and government communications are obvious. Yet our industry, with our relentless desire to 'hang with the kids', sees companies prioritise the teen market despite rising youth unemployment and graduate debt. The assumption is that the sole route to 'teenbucks' is digital, and to the 'seniors' market is the mid-market press and gardening weeklies.

On the Eastward power shift, although the dramatic growth of BRIC and CHIME economies may have temporarily slowed, we are still looking at consumer spending in China alone hitting over \$2 trillion by 2015.

When it comes to global connectivity Watson notes that 1 billion of us are active online, expected to double in a decade, and 2.5 billion of us are communicating with each other via mobile phones. Meanwhile 13 per cent of the world's population is now living somewhere other than the country of their birth.

The Environment and CSR remain major drivers of present and future consumer and corporate behaviour. These days being environmentally responsible is a basic consumer expectation, but clever marketing of real environmental benefits can give a brand a competitive edge in a recovering and increasingly choosy consumer market.

GRIN stands for Genetics, Robotics, Internet and Nanotechnology, and the big beast for us is the 'I'. Although the Internet along with (digital and social media) is the biggest driver of change in marketing, there are important moves in the media landscape and consumer thinking/ behaviour that defies most expectations. Weber Shandwick's recent **INLINE Communications research** highlights this.

While the expected upsurge in third party advocacy is there, almost a quarter of 'influence' is still generated by 'traditional' media – compared to less than half of that for advertising – and many of those third party advocates will themselves be influenced by other spokes on the wheel including media coverage and advertising.

Then there are the demographic assumptions to be challenged. Our research found that 50 per cent of UK consumers aged 18-34 claimed their purchasing decisions were influenced by "traditional" print media. But only 26 per cent of UK consumers aged 55+ claimed their decisions were influenced by traditional media.

So the assumption that youth in general no longer consume print and broadcast media; that they only buy what friends advocate online, that older consumers are more influenced by traditional media coverage, are all false claims. Clearly young consumers are more interested than older consumers in interacting with brands online. But they don't always believe what they see. Offline and online are clearly both important. Only research and customer insights can challenge the urban myths that surround modern marketing.

In order for PR to really help organisations and clients take advantage of the economic upturn, the lack of ethnic – and occasionally social – diversity in PR is something that must also be addressed. Research by Weber Shandwick's Multi-Cultural Communications practice revealed that not only are ethnic groups a rapidly growing segment of consumers and society, but that three quarters of Black and Asian consumers and half of Chinese consumers in the UK felt that marketing by mainstream brands had little or no relevance to them.

If we are to help organisations and clients, we need to look at our own ranks and work hard to diversify so as to accurately reflect those who's purchasing power and attitudes we claim to understand.

Although we are emerging from recession, the question of how quickly and how sustainably we are doing so is still an open one. But when the economic upturn does come, for us in PR we cannot simply revert back to 'business as usual'.



South Africa – Up There with the Best in the World



By this time next year South Africa will be conducting a post-mortem of the staging of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. We will be celebrating our successes and evaluating the challenges ahead faced by the industry. The 2010 FIFA World Cup will be South Africa's biggest event ever and we are quite conscious that the eyes of the world are on us. We have not shied away from large events before, and we actually have an excellent track record in hosting several similar, albeit smaller, events. What makes this event different is that it has already had a massive impact on most South Africans.

Wherever you travel in any of the major host cities you will experience traffic gridlocks with roads being extensively upgraded and a skyline punctuated with cranes and building sites. A new underground railway system being built from scratch in Johannesburg has already earned the accolade as the largest engineering project currently in the world. Johannesburg, host city to the Final, is pulling out all the stops to impress the anticipated visitors and armchair spectators from all over the world.

Just over ten years ago, the South African public relations industry was rather isolated with only a few large players and many smaller ones. After years of isolation, South Africa emerged determined to catch up with the rest of the world. And what better way than to throw the FIFA World Cup at a developmental country on a continent that has never hosted this tournament before.

Since FIFA awarded the host title to South Africa five years ago, soccer fever has not only infected most South Africans but also the rest of the continent. The spotlight was thrust upon a country that had experienced a mere 10 years of democracy. And in these 10 years South Africa has grown in leaps and bounds. Once a pariah state, South Africa has positioned herself as the springboard into

Africa where many multinational companies have established their head offices while trading more extensively into the rest of the continent.

With this growing multinational presence, the PR environment has also changed dramatically and South Africa has developed into the creative springboard into the rest of the continent. South Africa has grown a significant communications, PR and advertising base that can now proudly compete globally.

The benefits of hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup have already been felt on the rest of the continent where Cape Town and Johannesburg have become the continental capitals of creativity. South Africa's PR prowess has followed the multinational excursion into the "last frontier". This creative paradigm is reciprocal with many of Africa's finest and most creative people visiting this country to learn more and gain greater experience. This experience is then returned to their homelands where the ante of the profession is upped quite significantly, mutated and exported within the confines of national borders and boundaries.

With the advent of the major sponsors of the FIFA World Cup increasing their activities on our doorstep in preparation for the 2010 spectacular, South African PR companies have been given the opportunity to perform on the world stage. A plethora of hospitality venues, hotels, bed and breakfast establishments have all sprouted up from a very small base. International booking agents are using their clout to deliver enough accommodation to the event organisers. The large and small establishments alike are experimenting with new creative marketing ideas to attract customers.

The paraphernalia industry is experiencing a steep learning curve too. After South Africa was chosen to host the 2010 tournament, huge public and law enforcement attention was paid to the spread of counterfeit goods. Before the spotlight was turned directly onto this country, counterfeit goods – from the humble T-shirt to the latest movie on DVD – proliferated. The source countries of these goods saw South Africa as virgin territory. The law enforcement authorities have successfully clamped down on these illegal activities and have raided and confiscated goods throughout the country. Intellectual rights are being adhered to and respected as most other countries do.

The impact of awarding the 2010 FIFA World Cup to this country will have a profound influence on its creative minds and those on the rest of the continent for many years to come. South African PR companies have absorbed the best international practices very quickly and we have been adept at emulating the best and discarding the mediocre. The PR industry here has evolved quickly and is spreading its wings into every corner of this continent. Multinational companies are entrusting their African requirements to South African PR companies. The benefit to them is quite clear due to our prolific knowledge and understanding of the 53 countries comprising Africa, each with an individual and unique heritage.



Damage Control: CEO as Reputation Guardian



CEOs are the ultimate guardians of reputation and must act promptly, decisively and transparently.

As the corporate reputation “stumble rate” continues to rise, leaders need to know not only how to build company reputations but, more importantly, how to protect and salvage tarnished reputations. Recent events at highly regarded companies have shown us that reputation loss is not limited to any one particular region and can strike any company or organisation.

These mounting corporate falls from grace demonstrate that a company's reputation can be destroyed in seconds. A mishandled response, inappropriate act, product tampering, disgruntled employee, confidential leak, misdirected email, personal indiscretion or financial irregularities all have the power to instantly tarnish a respected reputation. The accelerated growth in the Internet, micro-constituencies, media scrutiny and public distrust makes managing corporate reputation an increasingly challenging task. While reputation loss may now be inevitable, the well-managed company and reputation-conscious leader need not stand defenceless when faced with a damaged reputation. In these tumultuous times, CEOs are increasingly being called upon to be a jack of all trades when it comes to reputation management.

CEOs now realise that reputation management is as important and complex as any other high-level business function. As a Fortune 100 CEO once said, “I have two functions: lead the company as CEO with integrity, clarity and purpose, as measured by financial performance and reputation; lead the board as chairman with vision and openness. . .” CEO involvement in reputation building and management is now a strategic line job, not just window dressing.

Failure to protect reputation rests squarely on the CEO's shoulders. Weber Shandwick's Safeguarding Reputation™ multi-market executive survey found that when crisis strikes, nearly 60 per cent of the responsibility for the crisis is attributed to the CEO. CEOs themselves feel no differently. Most CEOs would agree that reputation management responsibility primarily lies at their door. Although reputation erosion is usually the result of more than one person's failure, the loss is rarely shared. In some cases it can reach the senior management team; however, the blame for reputation loss usually lands in the corner suite.

Not only do CEOs need to take charge of their company reputation management, but they must acknowledge that their own reputation is inextricably linked to that of the company's. When the CEO speaks, the company speaks. The CEO is the face of the company. CEOs are the ultimate guardians of reputation and must act promptly, decisively and transparently following a crisis or challenge to their company's reputation. Accordingly, the CEO must ensure that the manner in which he or she presents themselves to stakeholders – whether it is customers, regulators, analysts, bloggers or employees – is consistent with the company's vision, code of conduct, and values.

The CEO is also the strategic player in reputation recovery. Oxford Metrica, a strategy firm, concluded that crises are times when CEOs can build reputation equity and value for their company. Northwestern professor Clarke Caywood has said that any assault on the reputation of a company is a crisis and reputations are built on how management responds to crises. Essentially, a CEO's ability to manage reputational difficulty is the determining factor in whether stakeholders retain confidence in the company and believe that reputation will eventually be restored.

CEOs are also chief communicators today. In times of reputation failure, leaders must communicate both the good and the bad quickly and frequently. One CEO has said that people are always hungrier for information when times are difficult. Leaders should use channels that are best suited for different audiences such as electronic communications, videos, blogs or wikis, employer-to-home communications, and in-person meetings.

Communication is a two-way street. Not only must CEOs communicate but they must listen as well. A CEO once remarked to me that his mother told him that he was given one mouth, one nose and two ears in proportion to how they should be used – to listen harder. In good times and bad, leaders should go out of their way to take all the bad news they hear and multiply it by 10 or even 100. Instead of shooting the messenger of bad news, leaders should welcome and seek them out. Monitoring the blogosphere, suggestion boxes, exit interviews and satisfaction surveys should be at the top of every leader's to-do list. Reputations are not always destroyed outright, but are often gradually eroded by a ripple effect.

In addition to listening well, CEOs must say something worth paying attention to. Weber Shandwick's CEO Harris Diamond was recently quoted in *Marketing News* as saying that “The reason that you can't underestimate Barack Obama is we've had very few presidents who've had the ability to make us listen.” Talk for talk's sake does not safeguard and build company reputation. Talk that advances the conversation about a company's role in society and its well-being breaks through today's immense information fog and creates long-lasting impressions.

CEOs must be the first line of protection when reputations are damaged or in trouble. They must devote considerable energy and effort to defending and communicating their company's good name and most valuable asset.



Publish and Be Damned?



The duke's towering reputation was unaffected, perhaps even strengthened.

“Publish and be damned” is one of the duke of Wellington’s most famous remarks. It was his response to Joseph Stockdale, a pornographer, who was about to publish the memoirs of Harriette Wilson, a famous ‘escort’ of the time. Stockdale had offered to remove all references to the duke, but the duke refused to pay. The memoirs were duly published, making a fortune for both Stockdale and Wilson. Yet, though he was married with children, the duke’s towering reputation was unaffected, perhaps even strengthened by his standing firm in the face of adversity.

Not everybody is so sanguine at the prospect of the media reporting on matters they consider private. Recently, in England, the trading company Trafigura agreed to pay millions of pounds without admitting any liability regarding certain allegations. When a question was asked about this in parliament, however, Trafigura’s lawyers obtained an order preventing a newspaper reporting the question and a further order preventing reporting of the initial order. American readers used to first amendment protection may be scratching their heads, but English law takes a very different view on where the balance lies between freedom of speech and the freedoms of those being spoken (or written) about. Hence a number of states in the US have enacted laws nullifying the effect of English libel laws in their jurisdictions. But the difficulty of enforcing such laws nowadays is demonstrated by Trafigura’s lawyers abandoning these efforts after Twitter users worked out and wrote about what was going on anyway.

Of parliament, Wellington’s best known remark is “I never saw so many shocking bad hats in my life.” Most of us recognise that our legislatures are not perfect, but the concept in England of parliamentary privilege is clear and we value freedom of speech strongly. In this context, it is

surprising if it did not occur to Trafigura and its advisers how massively their efforts could backfire. Once a company makes payments, even without acknowledging any wrongdoing, the reputation game changes. Fair or unfair, people want to see corrective actions. Certainly, they do not want to see aggressive attempts to coerce the media. It seems inescapably the case that the bulk of the criticism that Trafigura now faces is less about what it is alleged to have done and much more about how it handled those allegations. This is actually bad for everyone. It means that the underlying issues may fester without resolution and, crucially, that the company now has far less chance of convincing the world community that it stands for values that many people would hope to see it (and anyone) support.

A contrasting case is instructive. When Dole Foods’ Swedish subsidiary sued a Swedish documentary maker for defamation, critics accused the company of stifling free speech. It transpired that Dole’s main accusers in the film were paid by a lawyer to say what they said, but Dole dropped its lawsuit anyway. Perhaps it determined that being perceived as attempting to silence criticism could harm its reputation and – given pressure from retailers – its business. So while still maintaining that the film is “fundamentally

flawed,” Dole’s General Counsel now says that he looks forward to an “open discussion” with the filmmakers.

Many PR professionals who are averse to “getting legal” with the media may feel that Trafigura’s experience supports this view. Yet it is important to emphasise that legal recourse is usually worth considering and sometimes vital. A false statement published at the wrong time in the wrong place can have devastating consequences. It may be imperative to enjoin publication. Without such a defence, rebuilding an unfairly tarnished reputation could take years and may well be beyond the means of many individuals, even of some companies. Investigative reporters pursue agendas and it is understandable that their targets can be concerned not only about getting a fair hearing at the time, but also about how they recover quickly from any loss of reputation.

The big picture is crucial. A successful strategy will have evaluated the benefits of both the assertion of legal rights and the communication of strong, positive messages. Having a close understanding of the opinions of the public and important stakeholders – how you are viewed, how your strategic options would be perceived, what people need to see and know – is crucial in order to get the balance right.

Far less well remembered than the celebrated quotation with which we started is what Wellington said next. He made clear that “if such trash is published”, he would sue. Many of those mentioned in Harriette Wilson’s memoirs did indeed sue for libel, and their claims ruined the publisher. Yet in the event, Wellington held his fire. Meanwhile the unabashed Stockdale went on many years later to sue the parliamentary publisher Hansard... for defamation!



The More Things Change.



Media relations remains core to our business, but it must be positioned among all the other channels.

We live in a constantly changing world that moves at lightning speed, where the latest Tweet breaks news just like CNN. From the shrinking of mainstream media to the evolution of citizen journalism and blogs, we as professional communicators must ride the new waves, transforming our business to help clients meet and exceed their goals.

Authenticity and relevance rule

Consumers around the globe are on the fast track, consuming information around the clock and from all around them. We must stay on our toes by understanding the Tweets, blogs and apps targeted at today's consumer. Face it: marketers can no longer completely dictate the path consumers take.

Yet although the way we communicate is changing, there are some core tenets in business that remain constant because they work.

Listening

Since I joined the Weber Shandwick network in summer 2009 I have made a point of travelling and listening. I've taken the opportunity to hear from new hires fresh from college and already living their lives 'INLINE'.

I listen to what's being reported in the news and consider how it's reaching consumers. I listen to colleagues across the US and around the globe sharing their success stories, their challenges and what they have learnt. I listen to existing clients striving to make their brands iconic. I listen to prospects and try to determine what kind of impact and changes they want to make in their space. And, of course, I make it my daily business to listen to today's consumer - whether through traditional market research or by talking to friends - to understand what insights drive their decisions, motivations and purchases.

When we listen we must also respond. Today's consumers crave interaction. From ensuring social media is an integral part of a campaign to delivering apps on mobile phones, the most successful brands go direct to the consumer letting them know that they have been heard.

At Weber Shandwick, we are well beyond the days of Show and Tell – showcasing the product and telling a story to the media and ultimately the consumer. Today's approach is about sharing that story directly with the consumer, piquing their interest in the idea and motivating them to take action.

Relevance

Early on in my career, some of the best communicators in the business reminded me of the importance of remaining relevant. Whether you make a point of walking out of the office to experience the city in which you live, or going online to check the latest news and blog postings, remaining relevant is no longer a 'nice to have.' It's a MUST.

I'm a working mother with two teenaged daughters, so it's imperative for me to keep on top of what my kids are listening to, learning from and experiencing. They are brand junkies, even at 13 and 14 years old. Staying in tune with what is impacting our business and our clients' businesses and leveraging those opportunities is what will yield the strongest partnerships.

Think outside local borders... but stay 'INLINE'

We must provide the best ideas, but we must be receptive to how we share those ideas. Media relations remains core to our business, but it must be positioned among all the other channels, and integrated with them to communicate with fresh new thinking.

However, not all social media channels are right for all brands. Some channels have more ownership of your brand and messaging. In essence it's about developing and nurturing the 'shareable story' that the audience spreads virally through their networks.

At Weber Shandwick we are committed to ensuring our clients find their niche and understand their consumer. While a digital approach is a core consideration for us, INLINE Communications dictates that we align the message across all relevant channels to ensure that we deliver consistent, engaging content across multiple media. The outcome: a fresh, meaningful, truly engaging and impactful communications campaign.

Firm belief

My firm belief is that we won't know if we don't try. At some point we need to move from talking to putting our thinking to good practice. Tapping into pop culture and current trends to create a conversation about our clients is one way, but when we take that leap of faith, spot the next trend, trust our gut and then ground it in research and insight, we can help our partners get there first.

At Weber Shandwick, we are proud of the great work we do around the globe. We continue to challenge ourselves to connect in meaningful and authentic ways. We search for the insight that then informs great programmes and ultimately the greatest connections.

Let's always challenge ourselves and our clients to explore the best in breed, whether it is ours or the product of another organisation. While the world may be changing fast, at Weber Shandwick some things stay constant. We remain committed to assembling the best team for each assignment and delivering the best work.



Come Clean.

Can cleantech provide green shoots?



When Kermit the Frog lamented that “it’s not easy being green,” he could not have guessed how appropriate a warning he was sounding. As the world stands at the crossroads of a ‘make or break’ climate summit in Copenhagen, the political and corporate appetite for a breakthrough on tackling climate change hangs in the balance. Can a deal be brokered that will achieve the necessary cut-through for the transition to a low carbon global economy that virtually every scientist now regards as non-negotiable? What trade-offs can be secured that do not render any global agreement, like so many past attempts, a step in the right direction but in reality nowhere near bold enough?

For any Copenhagen optimist, one key element of any deal on climate is the continued proliferation of technologies and services that are broadly defined as cleantech. This category represents new technologies and business models that provide a dual return – securing a financial and an environmental dividend. For companies in this sector, providing low carbon and environmentally sensitive goods and services, the business opportunity is already apparent. The UK government’s recent Low Carbon Economy Report estimated the global market for such products at £3 trillion. This finding comes on top of successive commitments by governments around the globe to commit funding for clean technologies as a response to the recent economic downturn, triggering a green-led economic revival. ‘Green jobs’ are all the rage.

It is estimated that if 20 per cent of Europe’s energy could come from renewable sources this could provide in excess of one million jobs by 2020. Europe’s cleantech sector is already developing at a comparable rate to the global competition, particularly in renewable technologies. Where Europe lags behind is in venture capital funding. Recent estimates place total cleantech investment in Europe during 2008 at €900 million against €1.8 billion in the United States.

For companies that provide technologies or services that help address or mitigate the impact of climate change, it’s essential to understand the twin dynamics of political expediency and economic imperative. In short, this means that communicating with one priority audience at the expense of the others will not work. Unlike comparable start-ups or growth areas, companies in this sector need to factor in the impact of industry, political, environmental campaign groups and other opinion leaders on their business model from day one.

For other sectors, the dislocation in the global financial markets has fundamentally disrupted growth strategies and investment opportunities. Cleantech has shown the strongest investor sentiment particularly amongst “pure investors” who have identified the opportunity to address sustainability while simultaneously creating long-term value.

The other imperative from the outset is political savvy. Copenhagen and the global agenda on climate change reiterate how important this is for all governments. The crux of their needs is solutions. They need guidance and advice from cleantech companies to identify products and services that work, and technologies that are in the pipeline.

Finally, cleantech companies need to be smart industry players. If your potential customers don’t understand your product offer, the sales conversion rate is obviously going to be lower. Weber Shandwick’s Cleantech practice recently commissioned a report on industry uptake and adoption of green technology products in Europe. Over half the organisations surveyed highlighted a lack of information as the principle barrier to making cleantech choices.

Encouragingly, 80 per cent of respondents flagged that they had some form of cleantech purchasing policy in place.

There’s a strong and growing take up of cleantech products and services in Europe, and across the globe. The competitive advantage will clearly lie with companies that can communicate the benefits of their products and services in a compelling way to all the right audiences. The first step in this communication journey is overcoming the perceived price barrier around cleantech products and services by demonstrating how solutions can create bottom line savings and other clear business benefits.

The greatest challenge for cleantech is also the greatest opportunity: the imperative of urgent action. Success will surely come for cleantech companies that communicate quickly, comprehensively and smartly. In the long run, being green will surely be easier than Kermit envisaged. But there’s still a long way to go.

For a copy of the Weber Shandwick report, entitled *Come Clean*, please visit the European Technology Practice website **here**.

Meaningful. New.
Productive. Exciting.
Strong. Rich.
Challenging. Trusting.
Fulfilling. Genuine.

Good relationships
are always rewarding.

Winning awards is great, but just as important to us is working closely with our clients to create powerful campaigns that really deliver. Our deep commitment to client service and creativity has led to Weber Shandwick being named Gold Medal Winner by *PRWeek's* 2009 Global Agency Report Card and recognised as International Consultancy of the Year by *PRWeek* UK and the UK PRCA. Thank you to all of the clients and people across our international network for their magnificent contribution to a challenging but extremely rewarding year. To find out more about award-winning PR, contact Colin Byrne, CEO UK & Europe on +44 (0)20 7067 0191 or cbyrne@webershandwick.com

www.webershandwick.com

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Advocacy starts here.