



Social Media: Grassroots Innovation in Public Relations. Role of Users in Openly Shaping Organizational Values

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The paper addresses the concept of Networks and Social Media in the knowledge-based economy, demonstrating how excellent Public Relations strategies should take into account the innovation processes of lay-people: Grassroots Innovation. The organizational communication procedures should know how to effectively manage open source structures and networks, encouraging bottom innovation. This fruitful innovation becomes an underground mainstream, following the downshifting phenomena worldwide. The fact that now communities have resources to mobilize and obtain outcomes should not be seen as threat for companies, but as something from which they can learn.

My arguments will follow the idea that Social Media is the trigger for a sustainable organizational social commitment, as a pro-active answer to current global trends and paradoxes, as outlined by E. Ordeix and J. Xifra. Moreover, acting as an open company and showing commitment to its networks, the collective creativity (namely known in the literature as the 'hacker culture') can be used for commonly shaping organizational values and identities, solving, in this way, the contradiction between local and global values.

The Real Corporate Responsibility comes with understanding and supporting the already existing trends of collective creativity, networking, sharing and innovation from a grassroots level- where the real commitment can be visible. Only then a company can claim that its communication standards are high and its contribution to society is sustainable.

This means that the new challenge from managers will be the ability to recognize good ideas from their public communities. It comes clearer that this perspective prescribes a world of 'non-zero-sum' thinking.

Just as excellent PR principles prove, solely financial interests are not longer sustainable for any organization. The changing economic behavior is also proven by the rise of new motivational drives: social signals, instead of managerial commands or market prices. The most important difference is that communities of users will grow stronger and survive, regardless the financial faith of companies. Therefore, it is a company's responsibility, in its way to surviving this new reality, to open-up for grassroots inno-

vation and catch the big wave of social media by managing the dynamics of networks and using peer-to peer tools. Moreover, consumers are consistently willing to pay more for a product they have participated in producing. But how about a value or an identity they have participated in designing?

Social Networks and Open Source trends prove that the values and identity of a company can and should be commonly constructed. A truly social committed company should know, without fears, how to involve the community and the grass root innovation to upgrade its values, at the very core of its identity. The public can collectively interact with the values proposed by an organization, re-shaping them in a playful exploration.

With the Arduino example, I will prove how the concepts of identity and business innovation are nowadays the best competitive features. The example is meaningful for understanding that openness and commitment are needed in order to lead, and how the public can offer unexpected returns if their trust is won.

The ideas revealed in this paper also show the relevance of the study for engaging the internal public in a sustainable welfare. Playing and exploring are the new philosophy of a creative working class, contrasting the mental model from the ascetic Protestant ethic, in which labor is synonym with 'duty' and innovation is linked with material growth and consumption at all costs. But in the knowledge-based economy, there is no way of enforcing individual patterns of creativity if we expect innovation to take place. Instead, the grassroots innovation principle for corporate standards is also a way of efficiently involving the internal public, exploring its creativity and resources while transforming their work in a truly enjoyable experience.

KEY WORDS: commitment, open collaboration, collective creativity.

PALABRAS CLAVE: compromiso, colaboración abierta, creatividad colectiva.

Towards a Social Welfare

The following paper addresses the concept of Networks and Social Media, in an attempt to justify how excellent Public Relations strategies should take into account the innovation processes of lay-people: Grassroots Innovation. My choice was triggered by the fact that 'despite the important role played by the management of values and the commitments deriving from them, studies and methodology in this field are poor',¹ in the words of E. Ordeix and J. Xifra. Therefore, I will analyze the paradigm shift of Values and Identities in web 2.0, where communication technologies re-enforce the idea of participation and democratization, allowing innovation to take place not as a linear process, but as a branching, incremental one. My claim is that New Media solely has no substance itself: the real relevant concept is Social Media. It is well known that assertive communication implies the involvement of Key Opinion Leaders. But as the public sphere has changed due to new technolo-



gies, the Opinion Leaders are located at a different level. The main challenge is to identify them and trigger the 'tipping point'.

Nowadays, the strategic Public Relations initiatives should know how to effectively manage *open source structures and networks*, letting innovation have its own rhythm. This fruitful innovation becomes an underground mainstream, following the *downshifting* phenomena worldwide: More and more people simply 'take knowledge and information from their back pockets and transfer it to the problem at hand'.² This is what I define as grassroots innovation, based on open source principles. My arguments will follow the idea that Social Media is the trigger for a sustainable organizational social commitment, as a pro-active answer to current global trends and paradoxes, as outlined by E. Ordeix and J. Xifra.³

Methodology

In the following, the first part of the paper comprises a scholar research, comparing different approaches on social media. I consider this theoretical journey essential for understanding its relevance for the Public Relations expertise. The second part deals with a study case of a company (Arduino) that decided to go up to the extreme with the concepts of 'openness' and 'commitment': my aim is to briefly analyze the potential and the limitations of such a business model, relating it to the enhancement of Grassroots Innovation and Corporate Commitment.

Social Media and Emerging Networking Trends

Why Social Media Means More Than New Media

The current debates on the consequences of new technologies started with Paul Levinson, who questioned the *democratization* of communication,⁴ considering the way in which new media are permitting a new way of *archiving knowledge*. For Levinson, the Internet is the actually the user,⁵ and his intuition will be further argued over time by the concepts of 'new media' and 'social media'.

The term 'new media' was proposed by Manuel Castells in his approach, the new public sphere is a clear new type of global citizenship with a greater force in influencing the *political institutions*. Considering the four major crises of our current society (efficiency crisis, legitimacy, identity and equity crises), Castells proposes that the peril can only be overcome by the formation of a *global civil society*.⁶ Essentially, he proposes the concept of '*public diplomacy*' (as an excellent PR *avant la lettre*) of as an instrument for knowledge articulation in the new public sphere: this instrument will not focus on private interests and the greed for power, but on 'creating a space for common values, significations and participation'.⁷ The core system is defined as a 'social network', and its



principles are directly related to the ones claimed by excellent Public Relations practices.

In this line of thinking, Manuel Castells defines the networks as a 'set of interconnected (...) absorbing more relevant information, and processing it more efficiently'.⁸ The three major features of social networks are a result on the new technological environment: flexibility (reconfiguring), scalability (expand or shrink) and survivability.⁹ The concept of new media has been from its very start identified with the 'informational age'. However, Manuel Castells argues that what new technology managed to bring is not information, but a 'new social structure based on communication'.¹⁰ I give credit to this perspective and further on I will try to analyze information and the values attach to it as a new currency being trade by social networks, arguing *that the real relevance for PR is not the new media, but the social media*.

Only the concept of Social Media is integrating ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) in the socio-technical regime, allowing researchers to identify the social grammar around them. Technologies solely do not hold any relevance out of the context. So the stress should be not upon the concept of 'information', but upon this network 'trading' process. In other words, about communication and how knowledge can be created, recorded, accessed and challenged, in the framework of Public Relations practicing.

Social Media as a Statement of Sharing & Commitment

My focus will be not on the questionable issues of Web 2.0 and networks, but on one of their clear advantage: the mutual benefices of active users- *peer-to-peer file sharing*. In my analysis, I rely on Tim O'Reilly who defines as a '*harnessing collective intelligence*'¹¹ the process in which information is connected by the usage of references and hyperlinks. Similarly to brain synapses, some associations are getting stronger due to repetition and intensity, and the connections made are growing organically: this is how collective and connective action proves the distinction between *simply publishing* in Web 1.0 and *real participation* in Web 2.0. It will be further argued that it Web 2.0 really turns out now to be merely seen as a technology, as a tool for communication experts, but as an attitude, a statement: share with the others! And this attitude is the one matching the excellent PR practices in the new global setting.

Jan Van Dijk¹² shows that digitalization enables the standardization and differentiation of culture, fragmentation, collage, acceleration & visualization of culture. But in this real-world scenario, is there any value left to be defined and shared... or humanity will be completely lost in an ocean of relativism? What is the nowadays relevance of the *Truth, Values and Identity* in this avalanche of information? In order to gain a network with public diplomacy, Castells proposed as prior condition finding a common interest,¹³ which is relevant for PR practices, in identifying common links between the different publics' agen-



das of interests. In the following, I will discuss the idea of *social participation* in the virtue of a '*common interest*', and a '*common value*' by questioning: which ones?

Values '2.0': Non-rivalry as a Pre-requisite of Grassroots Innovation

A good start will be to decide upon what is for sure a *non-value* of social media. Following this idea, it can be argued that if they operate with open sources and provide open content, the network structures have an increasing quality, due to transparency, viability and low costs. Moreover, according to Terry Flew, these 'collective, self organizing knowledge networks' are an argument that 'open source software development will generate superior outcomes'¹⁴ than the ones developed by companies, and this brings an important challenge to capitalist world: the PR practice must keep up with this new challenge. The fact that now communities have resources to mobilize and obtain outcomes should not be seen as threat for companies, but as something from which they can learn. Strategic PR should now focus on how to create truly learning organization, able to learn how to use and enhance grassroots innovation.

Until now, 'the information has tended to be viewed as a public good in so far as its consumption is 'non-rivalouse', in the words of Benkler.¹⁵ So rivalry and ferocious competition are the non-values of the social media. In the Socio-technical network of the internet, working together –instead of competing– proves to have more advantages than ever. But what are the consequences for PR practices? Firstly, Terry Flew points at the 'knowledge economy' and the 'new capacity to collaboratively develop, distribute, share and communicate knowledge'.¹⁶ Moreover, new and unforeseen connections appear between arts, media and the technology sector: their pinnacle are the '*creative industries*',¹⁷ due to the fact that creativity is no longer linked only to arts, but to business, science or technology also. As a result, 'the cultural productions are now 'collaborative, not necessarily driven by market criteria'.¹⁸ This trend is obviously linked to the excellence principle of PR, according to which 'public relations should be based on a worldview that incorporates ethics into the processes'.¹⁹ I will further analyze these 'ethical' issues.

Ethics of Networks

Making a scholar research, I shall start by presenting the evolution of the concepts related to the Ethics of Networks. Burgess (2006) talks about '*vernacular creativity*' being possible and 'emerging from non-elite social contexts and communicative conventions';²⁰ Leadbeater & Miller discuss the *PRO-AM Revolution* and how 'innovative, committed and networked amateurs are working to professional standards',²¹ while Terry Flew reminds us of the 'IT-related creative practice (ITCP)' related to the '3 T-s' of *Technology, Talent and Tolerance*...²² Similarly, this new infusion of creativity and tolerance, for which new techno-

logy provides the context, has been seen by Pekka Himanen as a '*hacker ethic*' meaning by this, not computer criminals but (...) people who (...) believe that <<*informational-sharing is a powerful positive good*>> (Raymond, 2000b)²³. This new ethic is antithetic with what Himanen²⁴ calls the '*protestant ethic*' (Weber) in the industrial economy, driven by totally different resorts: the money ethic.

And just as Himanen's approach, Manuel Castells' perspective is that 'the social movement (...) is oriented toward a transformation of the values of society (...) [a] reunification of the interest of the human species as a common good, in opposition to the industrial values of material growth and consumption at all costs'.²⁵ Just as excellent PR principles prove, solely financial interests are not sustainable anymore for any organization: I am determined to believe that strategic PR practices are one of the best mechanisms for adapting a company to this shift from the 'protestant ethic' to the 'hacker ethic', for a sustainable assessment of social media. I am determined to believe that this will lead to rewarding relationships between organizations and their publics.

The Value of Sharing

The power of the networked is enforced by the belief that 'the synergy is obtained by *giving to others and receiving from others*'.²⁶ The global value we have been looking forward to share, is actually... the *value of sharing*. In Castells' words, 'the culture of the global network society is a culture of protocols of communication enabling communication between different cultures on the basis, not necessarily of shared values, but of *sharing the value of communication*'.²⁷

Specifically, Derrick de Kerckhove considers that the real authority of this technologically empowered networked is the *mutual trust* between users, as a precondition for the '*connective mind*'.²⁸ Social media empowers the public to 'disseminate debate and deliberate, challenging professional and official positions',²⁹ providing a new challenge for PR as a profession. Now the communication experts have to identify and keep the pace with new opinion trends, harsh critiques and informal key opinion leaders (Blogs and Twitter are an example). The users have become more and more exquisite in their attitude towards organizations, and their capacity to create and maintain communities of interest empowers them. The challenge for excellent PR practices is to understand the underlying mechanism of what Kerckhove calls the '*architecture of participation*'.³⁰ This new participative paradigm can signify a great potential for innovative companies, due to the very process of branching creativity and intelligence for a wide range of fruitful sources: innovation emerges bottom-up. It is the PR mission to adjust the managerial level of the represented organization to the new public demands, mobilizing the resources of the collective intelligence, accepting and integrating grassroots innovation in the company's main strategy.



Why the Bazaar is a Strategic PR Orientation

In my argumentation, I will continue opposing the 'protestant ethic' of the commercial world with 'hacker ethic' of the social media, proving that companies, adapting their PR strategies to these new trends, can actually benefit from this paradigm shift.

The article of E.S Raymond, '*The Cathedral and the Bazaar*'³¹ provides a comparative analysis between two different mental models, namely two different ways of constructing knowledge: The 'cathedral' model that runs the commercial rough world and the "bazaar" model made explicit within the generosity principle of the Linux world.

Starting with the assumption that many heads are obviously more efficient than one, Raymond shows that managing collective intelligence can be feasible and that the result can actually overcome expectations. Like a mosaic structure, the bazaar world of open source permits everyone to have a contribution at the scale of their own capacities. In this way, no human resource is wasted in grassroots innovation: someone can find a problem; somebody else can define it, and another person can come up with the perfect solution. The same principle can be applied when it comes to involving the public in a sustainable relation with an organization. Everyone has a role to play, yet it is difficult, limiting and non-efficient to impose roles. Open Source networks prove that is better to let the users choose their roles, deciding themselves what are they good for, when and how. In this way, the Public Relations experts can transform grassroots innovation in a managerial resource, obtaining an inspiring intrapreneurship,³² defined by James Grunig as mixture of innovation and entrepreneurial skills.

Companies have to fight the fear that the "open" character will result in a chaotic and anarchic conduct that would completely destabilize the system. We have to get rid our old ways of perceiving 'divided loyalties'³³ between the interests of the organization and the interests of different publics. In front of cultural fragmentation and values diversity, it seems impossible for PR experts to constructively deal with the 'mixed motives'³⁴ of different agendas of interests: the agenda of organizations and the one of users. But my claim is that both sides should have an interest for a sustainable collaboration and co-development.

Sustainable Collaboration

I believe the most important difference is that communities of users will grow stronger and survive, regardless the faith of companies. Therefore, it is a company's responsibility, in its way to surviving this new reality, to open-up for grassroots innovation and catch the big wave of social media. The PR duty is to start the process at the very core of the organization: commitment towards its internal public, while convincing in the same time the managers of the great potential of users.



Why openness and commitment? Grunig considers that 'public relations cannot be excellent if organizations have a culture that is authoritarian, manipulative and controlling of others'.³⁵ But, in the same time, Public Relations experts should convince to board that freedom of the users does not mean chaos. Regulations are required for managing freedom and getting out the best of it. According to Raymond,³⁶ the adequate attitude includes: insights about users innovations, commitment & responsibility, recognition of better ideas, simplicity, communication skills, charm, and moreover, a leadership style that is based on the principle of common understanding, not on command and discipline. This perspective clearly translates the view of Grunig of high standard PR, who defined the '(...) concepts to measure the quality of the strategic relationship of organizations (...): reciprocity, trust, credibility, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction, and mutual understanding'.³⁷ This recipe is presented to be the best in recruiting and *energizing* effective communities, and the PR experts looking for excellence in communication should be inspired by this theory.

Commons-based Peer Production: Non-Zero Sum Thinking

Benkler asserts in his article³⁸ '*Linux and the Nature of the Firm*' the emergence of a third mode of production (besides employees in firms and individuals in markets), namely the *commons-based peer production*, a breakthrough made possible by the digital networking, bringing along a wider socio-economical phenomenon, in which production depends on modularity, granularity and the cost of integration. In this way, it becomes clear that the role of new media is to make possible social media. Further on, I will continue arguing why strategic PR should have as a priority *social media*.

In the *commons-based peer production*, the grassroots innovation becomes clear: the new motivational drives are *social signals*, not managerial commands or market prices. Strategic PR shall now start focusing on these social signals. The peer-to-peer production exceeds a new volunteering culture that is currently destabilized the current economic behavior. How can companies keep the pace with this value shift?

Personally, I consider the excellent PR practices as an answer, because their 'stalwarts' concepts of 'trust and credibility'³⁹ fit perfectly with the hacker ethic and its micro-motivations. The openness of organizations provide a platform for harnessing collective intelligence, and moreover, for making the most out of collective creativity, maximizing the resources that each individual can offer for the benefit of the community. The excellence in PR starts from 'home': the communication expert nowadays has the challenge to convince its own company that information and culture are public goods, hence the economical drive for pursuing them should be *non-rival* and grassroots innovation is the most precious resource.



Open Organizations: A Brief Study Case of Arduino Model

Business Innovation Based on Communities

As I have been triggered by the bazaar model proposed by Eric Raymond, this part of the paper will approach the concept of knowledge-based economy.⁴⁰ My focus will be on an organizational example in which the participatory principle of peer-to-peer innovation is applied by including networking and user's innovation not only in the web 2.0 territory, but in every aspect of the company. I will focus on excellence in Public Relations and its linkage with business innovation, in this shift of socio-economical mental models, using as support the Arduino concept.

Arduino is an example in which a small company uses its target public to gain more power and credibility than a huge corporation. In every sense, the initiators of this company have applied the principles of being open and committed, up to the extreme: they wanted to test whether the community can substitute 'the corporate support that is usually required for electronics development'.⁴¹

Basically, an Arduino project aim is to provide electronic tools 'that are accessible, low-cost, low capital investment, flexible and easy-to-use for artists and hobbyists, particularly those who might not otherwise have access to more sophisticated controllers that require more complicated tools'.⁴² Namely, the Italian firm that initiated this project constructs the basic circuit board-transforming it into a cheap commodity: 50,000 Arduino units have been sold worldwide in two years.⁴³ Such an exciting concept that changes our idea of producing technological devices must be accepted together with its business model. The special thing about this small company is its total openness:

Maximum Degree of Transparency is Maximizing Autonomy

Firstly, the Arduino business model features a company based on giving everything away: schemas, design files, software, marketing plans, everything is online, so *the degree of transparency is maximum*. For most of the managers around us, this would seem to be like committing company suicide. But Arduino owners were not afraid to broadcast their knowledge and problems. And the amazing result of their income shows their risky strategy actually works. Far from getting to enthusiastic about this, my intention is to critically analyze this new successful innovative business model, selecting the most relevant features linked with excellence in Public Relations. The Arduino example is the best one to prove that 'by giving up autonomy by building relationships, ironically, organizations maximize their autonomy'.⁴⁴ After all, we cannot deny that 'building relations –managing interdependence– is the substance of public relations'.⁴⁵

Secondly, how can Arduino 'channel volunteers around the world to work with you and still be a money-making company?'.⁴⁶ How can Arduino survive



when there are so many Asian companies that can simply download from the internet their plans and start producing on their own? Why is Arduino still surviving, facing this kind of competition? The answer I propose is the strategic PR used with excellent mastery, as follows:

Why Identity and Business Innovation Are the Best Competitive Features

Even if the company is opened, the initiators did not give away all the keys of their castle. They have reserved the name of the brand 'Arduino'⁴⁷ (Attribution-Share Alike license of Creative Commons), protecting their identity. So the symbolic level is the only one that can secure physical and virtual commodities, without becoming unethical and antisocial. A company's identity and the values attached to it become one of its greatest treasures.

Regarding competition, I identified two main branches: the starving copycat Asian companies, and the crushing giants from the industry. Why is the public still buying original Arduino and not a Chinese copy at half of the price? Because Arduino, risking by being open and proving commitment towards its public, has gained something much more precious: the commitment from its public, expressed by encouraging grassroots innovation. Regarding the competition with industry giants (corporations, multinationals) Arduino proves that sky-scraper firms just have to accept that openness and commitment are needed in order to lead. They should be aware of the consumer's potential for innovation, and their PR strategies should start using peer-to-peer networks as tools.

Relevance for Public Relations Expertise

Social Media and the Corporate Communication Paradoxes

In this paper, through my scholar research I have argued that *new media* is a concept with limitations: the focus should not be on ICTs, but on people –the most important resource of an organization–. Therefore, I consider that the term of *social media* has more relevance for PR practices, especially when it comes to finding solution for the three organizational trends and their paradoxes, identified by E. Ordeix and J. Xifra:⁴⁸

Firstly, a company's understanding of the underlying mechanisms of social media proves a clear orientation towards social sustainability. Moreover, despite the cultural fragmentation and heterogeneity, the innovation process can still flourish: using the value of sharing, any company can enjoy the benefits of grass-root innovation. The cleverest strategic corporate communication should be the invention of a new *development model* in which communication and commitment are the core values and inspiration comes from grassroots level of the *bazaar*. This new development model is sustainable excellence in Public Relations. The PR magic wand has to convince managers that the 'idealistic



social role⁴⁹ is taken over: now it is time for a 'pluralistic system' of interaction. PR experts should not longer understand by social responsibility- social protection. My belief is that this paternalistic view is now arrogance in the context of the social. The Real Corporate Responsibility comes with understanding and supporting the already existing trends of collective creativity, networking, sharing and innovation from a grassroots level. This is what I understand by 'commitment'. Only then a company can claim that its communication standards are high and its contribution to society is sustainable.

Secondly, organizations can strategically solve the Global vs. Local dichotomy. Knowledge diversity and abundance follows the diversity and abundance of users, their local, diverse life experience, professional formation and perspectives. My argument is that cultural differences and social diversity are a great potential for innovation: their tension is fruitful, and *collective creativity* is inspiring for finding new solutions to problems. The networks advantage is that they preserve the social coherence (on a global level) without attempting to eradicate and uniform differences (on a local level). This makes me believe that the 'global code of ethics'⁵⁰ should be derived from what I have described as the 'hacker ethic'.

Thirdly, E. Ordeix and J. Xifra pointed at how corporate communication standards are affected by the Global/Local conflict shadowing values. An organization is now challenged to prove its flexibility on a local level, yet maintain a unitary identity. Are values the though core of an organization, or should they be malleable? If they should, how much can we locally vary these values, without compromising the corporate coherence? This conflict between diversity and unity can be solved if we switch to the new thinking paradigm of the *social media*: my belief is that identity itself is no longer a private property of an organization, something that Public Relations can build and then simply offer it to the community of interest.

Commonly Constructing Values and Identities

Instead of worrying how to best fit the global values in a local context, why not have the courage to ask the people themselves?

Social Networks and Open Source trends prove that the values and identity of a company can and should be commonly constructed. A truly social committed company should know, without fears, how to involve the community and the grass root innovation to upgrade its values, at the very core of its identity. The public can collectively interact with the values proposed by an organization, re-shaping them in a playful exploration. I imagine this as an united effort between an organization and its public, in which a very powerful mutual trust relation is being build.

Of course, limitations do exist: If the open approach is not carefully managed and if the organization is not well internally structured, then the strategy will confuse the inner values. Clearly, the idea of a participative culture is an

ideal one. But, in practice, online social media is, until now, the closest to these desirable categories. Even if fully 'participative' remains abstract and unreachable, the social experiment of Arduino is a quite successful demo of this kind of culture.

Advantages of Grassroots Innovation

In Arduino's case, the community recognized the original initiators as the *core expertise, offering them their grassroots innovation*. People will not give up the very thing that empowered them- every time an innovation occurs, Arduino team will be the first one to find out about it. In this way, 'knowledge' becomes the most valuable economical resource. The company is, in this way, the first one that knows about an innovation: afterall, it is an issue of status and recognition, two main pillars of Corporate Communication.

Consumers will take initiative and come to the organization presenting their own innovative ideas, knowing that the organization will embrace their attitude. Just as Raymond proves with the Linux model,⁵¹ people are always willing to get involve and come with improvements... 'They almost *can't help themselves*'.⁵² So why not take profits, as a company, of this enormous potential? Clearly, the best way of managing this potential and winning the community on your side is mastering Public Relation practices at the excellent level.

Moreover, not only that the users are willing to share their innovation with a company, but they are actually valuing much more their inputs. So the economical sector can take countless profits from this creativity emergence. Michael Norton named this process '*The Ikea Effect*',⁵³ based on the finding that consumers are consistently willing to pay more for a product they have participated in producing. They just value their own creations much more.

This proves the validity of one of the most important rules in excellent Public Relations: involving your public (even in the design process of your products) can lead to countless reward. A reciprocity in which everyone seems to be happy to collaborate with the other: the organization, on one hand, and its publics, on the other. We should not be 'paralyzed' by the concept of 'divided loyalties'⁵⁴ between the interests of the organization and the interests of the publics. To my mind, the two agendas can be united for the benefit of both sides.

The rule seems to be simple: if you prove yourself to be trustful, your public will organize around you as a community of trust, offering you, in its turn, its commitment and support. And this is, in my opinion, the highest aim of excellent Public Relation practices: bringing a company to the level of enjoying the commitment of its public and benefiting from grassroots innovation. People are the most important resource: once you get them on your side, they will hardly let you down.



Internal Public Relations Revealing a New Professional Status

Moreover, the rise of creative industries, collective intelligence and power of networks has changed even the way people perceive their own profession nowadays. If Grunig claimed that 'Culture, Internal Communication, Structure, Equal Opportunity, and Job Satisfaction' –are the internal characteristics of excellence'–,⁵⁵ it means that the excellent internal PR strategy of a truly 'listening organization' should take into account that caring, *playing and exploring* are the new philosophy of a creative working class, contrasting the mental model from the ascetic Protestant ethic, in which labor is synonym with 'duty' and 'un-avoided obligation',⁵⁶ innovation is linked with material growth and consumption at all costs. But in the knowledge-based economy, there is no way of enforcing individual patterns of creativity if we expect innovation to take place. Instead, the grassroots innovation principle for corporate standards is also a way of efficiently involving the internal public, exploring its creativity and resources while transforming their work in a truly enjoyable experience.

Self-reprogrammed labor (continuously improved, freelancing & project based work) is taking over the generic labor, and the idea of leisure as a form of work makes Leadbeater assert that 'a huge amount of creative work is done in spite, or perhaps because, of people not being paid... They embody a new ethic of collaborative, shared effort'.⁵⁷ This means that the new challenge from managers will be the ability to recognize good ideas from users. It comes clearer that this perspective prescribes a world of 'non-zero-sum thinking', in which consumers claim a 'culture unfiltered by economic scarcity'.⁵⁸ If Public Relation strategies should aim at increasing the social welfare, then grassroots innovation is an essential chapter in this story.

Notes

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²⁰ FLEW. *Op. cit.*, p. 111.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

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²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁷ CASTELLS. *Op. cit.*, 2005, p. 39.

²⁸ KERCKHOVE, D. *Text, Context and Hypertext, three conditions of language, three conditions of mind* in Mensch & Computer 2002: *Vom interaktiven Werkzeug zu kooperativen Arbeits- und Lernwelten*. Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 2002, p. 15.

²⁹ FLEW. *Op. cit.*, p. 108.

³⁰ KERCKHOVE. *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

³¹ RAYMOND, E.S. (1997). *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*. First Monday. Vol. 3 (3). Available online: <http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue3_3/raymond> [Access: February 15, 2010].

³² GRUNIG. *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

³³ GRUNIG, J.E.; GRUNIG, L.A.; DOZIER, J.E. *Excellent public relations and effective organizations: a study of communication Management in three countries*. New Jersey: Routledge Communication Series, 2002, p. 556.

³⁴ GRUNIG. *Op. cit.*, p. 46.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

³⁶ RAYMOND. *Op. cit.*

³⁷ GRUNIG. *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

³⁸ BENKLER. *Op. cit.*

³⁹ GRUNIG. *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁴⁰ RAYMOND. *Op. cit.*

⁴¹ JOLLIFFE, D. *Arduino Fever*. From *Make: Technology on your time*. Vol. 7, 2007, available at <<http://hbswk.hbs.edu>> p. 53 [Access: December 16, 2009]

⁴² <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arduino>> [Access: December 16, 2009]

⁴³ THOMPSON, C. *Build it. Share it. Profit. Can Open Source Hardware work?* 2008 From *Wired* magazine online available at: <http://www.wired.com/techbiz/startups/magazine/1611/ff_openmanufacturing?currentPage=all> [Access: February 23, 2010].

⁴⁴ GRUNIG. *Op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ LAKHANI. *Op. cit.*

⁴⁷ THOMPSON. *Op. cit.*

⁴⁸ ORDEIX; XIFRA. *Op. cit.*

⁴⁹ GRUNIG. *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁵⁰ ORDEIX; XIFRA. *Op. cit.* p. 2.

⁵¹ RAYMOND. *Op. cit.* p. 10-11.

⁵² THOMPSON. *Op. cit.*

⁵³ NORTON, M.I. *The IKEA Effect: When Labor Leads to Love*, 2009. From <<http://hbr.org/web/2009/hbr-list/ikea-effect-when-labor-leads-to-love>> [Access: February 23, 2010].

⁵⁴ GRUNIG, GRUNIG, DOZIER. *Op. cit.*, p. 556.

⁵⁵ GRUNIG; TOTH; GRUNIG. *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁵⁶ CASTELLS. *Op. cit.*, 2008, p. 423

⁵⁷ FLEW. *Op. cit.*, p. 111.

⁵⁸ HESKETT, J. *What Happens When the Economics of Scarcity Meets the Economics of Abundance?* 2006. From <<http://hbswk.hbs.edu>> [Access: February 23, 2010].



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