

HOUSE JOURNAL AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: *Corporate Communication means any communication emanating from an organization or occurring within it. Here, the word ‘Corporate’ refers to the any kind of organization regardless of its ownership, activities etc. Corporate Communication is basically an instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonized and the organizational goals are achieved. Internal communication is a very important part of any corporate communication. The purpose of this article is to analyze the importance of ‘house journal’ as a tool for internal communication in any organization.*

Keywords: *Corporate Communication, Public Relation, House journal, Internal Communication, Public.*

Public Relations is a strategic two way communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and its publics. According to the Public Relations Society of India, **Public Relations help an organization and its public to adapt mutually to each other. It is an organizations' effort to win the cooperation of group of people. It helps the organization to interact and communicate effectively with the key-public.** PR is very important for an organization to promote corporate mission, services, products, reputation and gain public understanding.

Public relations have been practiced since the earliest times even though the name is of contemporary origin. There are ample evidences in the records of early Greek and Roman empires to show that great care was given to the influencing of public opinion. The phrase 'Public Relations' was first used in 1807. President Thomas Jefferson wrote the word in time of drafting his seventh address to the Congress. Ivy L. Lee began to use the term in 1919 and contributed to emergence of many of techniques and principles that characterize PR today.

During the depression in the United States in the 1930s the importance of corporate PR was understood. PR helped to raise a counter attack to the public distrust in business & the experience taught that only advertising in various media were not enough to sell products and gain profit. Here lies the importance of Corporate Communication. Corporate communication is basically an instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communications are harmonized. It includes all the communication activities generated by organization to achieve its planned objectives. Corporate PR is, thus, a planned and coordinated activity towards projecting the image of an organization. The basic underlying motive is to gain understanding, acceptance and goodwill for organizational goals, policies, programs and services. Every corporate organization has its own PR Publics. They are- internal publics and external publics. Mainly, employees are included in the internal publics. In this study, it is attempted to evaluate the role of house journal as a tool for Corporate Communication.

Internal communication- Internal communication is very important in functioning of every organization. Public Relations, like charity, begin at home. That is why: in any enlightened PR program employees should be the important target for attention. Management of human resources to achieve the corporate objectives is a crucial measure of success in PR.

Employee communication is- “the process of exchanging information, creating understanding and behavior among employees within an organization that reinforce the organizational vision, values and culture among employees, who can communicate the company’s message to the external audiences...The greatest benefit from effective employee communication is a knowledgeable workforce that is satisfied and productive, which leads to positive interactions with customers, investors and community.”

Employee relation is very important for an organization because employees are the company’s asset. Every organization, irrespective of its scale of functioning, geographical location, ownership pattern etc, needs an effective employee communication. Firstly, a company has to win the confidence of its employees before earning further credibility. Definitely, job security, adequate wages and safe and pleasant working conditions are the primary conditions which will help an organization to build good relationship with employees. Besides that there should be planned communication activities to create understanding and support among employees. A good employer- employee relation is the basis for a company’s corporate reputation. It enables the organization to function more efficiently. It requires giving the employee utmost care and consideration in every sphere of an organizational activity. It is the foundation on which the morale and motivation of the workforce depends. The prime role of employee relation is to create an environment on which the employees are encouraged to give their best. Every employee is a spokesman of the company. They are capable of creating goodwill/ ill will of the company. Satisfied and happy employees will promote the company. The first step in promoting positive external relations is achieving good internal relations. A company should not only communicate the new pension plans, medical benefits or leave rules to the employees. It should also make the aware of present plans and policies of the organizations. Again recognition is also a very powerful motivator for the employee. It leaves enormous effect on employee’s mind. So, good employee relation is very important to carry out organizational activities. Employee communication performs integrative function also. It helps to make a integrated workforce,

strengthens the bond between employees and contributes in smooth functioning of the organization.

Expansion of business activities in the mass production era made the society more complicated. As the number of hands increased, direct relationship between the owner and employees weakened. That is why: management stepped between the two as an impersonal force and employee relations as a key area in PR attempts to restore the relationship to a level where employer and employee can work together with mutual understanding. With the changing time, restructuring of organizational structure and invention of new technologies the organizations are realizing that an informed workforce is a necessity to retain the cutting edge in a competitive marketplace. Communication with the employees can lead to involvement and maximize their value to the organizations.

There are many tools which are used in an effective internal communication. Face to face meeting, conferences, memos, circulars or notices, or publications like annual report, newsletter, house journal etc or communication through new media like sending e-mails, posting in face book pages – everything serve as an important means of communication to employees. ‘House journal’ is a very important means for maintaining communication with both internal and external publics. A house journal is a well recognized part of the management’s communication process. It is a necessity to weld the bonds between an organization and its publics. A house journal is a strong platform for a company to advocate its own point of views, goals and achievements. A house-journal is basically a periodic publication by an establishment for its employees, customers and other interested people. In-house journals are very effective means of communication. These are used to foster a sense of loyalty among employees and to build a work culture among them. There are many types of house journal. Depending on the target audience it can be differentiated into three types: In-house journal for employees, External house journal for other stakeholders and mixed house journal which cater to both groups of readers.

In-house journals keep the downward flow of communication to the employees. The role of these house journals is multifaceted-from being a mouthpiece of management, a platform for sharing views, news and opinion, a tool to disseminate detailed information in a informal manner yet with authenticity to employees, motivational technique to ensure employees know what are

expected out of them, a facilitator of change when required to a method of creating common culture in organization. It is basically a platform for two way communication.

McNaughton, F. defined it as “a house magazine or bulletin to dealers, customers and employees, designed to promote goodwill, increase the sales, induce better salesmanship or develop better profits.”

Ramsay, R.E defined it as- ‘ A house-organ is any periodical publication issued by a person, firm, organization or corporation for distribution among any particular class of people, either for promoting goodwill, increasing sales, inducing better efforts or developing greater returns on any form of investment.’

V.B. Aggarwal and Gupta have stated that, ‘a house journal is a periodical publication which tries to establish regular communication between an organization and other public...In bigger organization direct communication becomes difficult and messages are conveyed through cyclostyle circulars. These grew into newsletters and finally into House journals.’ House-journals not only relay information to the employees but also instill a sense of belongingness to them. The concept of House journal dates back to 17th Century when first regular newsletter was said to have been brought out by a firm of German merchants and banker, ‘The Fugger’s’ in Augsburg in 1609. The famous Lloyds of London also brought out its company publication ‘Lloyds News ’in 1696. After a gap of many years first industrial house-journal ‘The Lowell Offering’ was published by the Lowell Cotton Mills of Massachusetts in 1842. Twenty-three years later in 1865, the second house journal was brought out by the Travellers Insurance Company, Hartford in the U.S.A in the name of Protection. In 1862, Great Western railway, Britain pioneered the publication of a house magazine.

This phenomenal increase in the publication of house journal has been seen in both the developing and developed countries including India. Different Industrial Houses, Business organizations, Public sector, Government sector, Public utility Concerns, Railway, Airlines, Tourism and Transport department, financial institutions like Bank, Insurance companies, other professional bodies- all bring out their own journals edited by professional editors. For example, there were only 575 house journals in U.S.A in 1929. In 1991, the number was approximately 10,000 with readership of 400 million.

In India, the concept of house journal took off in 20th Century only when Planter's Chronicle by United Planters Association of Southern India, was published in 1905, followed by 'The Nursing Journal of India' published by the trained Nurses Association in 1910. Three years later in 1913, Delhi Cloth Mill published its first house journal with the title- 'Delhi Cloth Mill Patrika'. One of the well managed professional bodies 'The Institute of Engineers' started its journal in 1920. But the first competently edited house-magazine 'Indian State Railway Magazine' was brought out by East Indian Railways in 1927.

In the words of Rita Bhimani (1994), 'As an integral part of an organization's communication structure, a house journal, far from being relegated to the status of being the past-up smile of a company for its employees and other publics, is still today, the surest means of establishing a two way traffic that is not propaganda, nor persuasion, but good, planned in-house prattle.'

According to Sam Black, the author of the famous book, 'Practical Public Relations', "a house journal helps to foster a family feeling by taking the workers and staffs into confidence of the management by explaining policies and seeking their interest and cooperation." Author JoAnne Yates in his book 'Control Through Communication: The Rise of System in American Management' has described the importance of In-house journals for effective employee communication. He mentioned in his book that 'except for basic financial records and letters bridging distances, there was very little written communication within firms before the late nineteenth century and oral communication was predominantly informal and undocumented...Many of the now-familiar genres of internal communication first developed significantly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.' According to him, the new forms of internal communication evolved as a practical response to the demands of growing companies that were systematizing their management. The internal communication served as a managerial tool for controlling the growing businesses. The late nineteenth century developments in duplicating technology that radically lowered the cost of mass duplication technology encouraged the companies to use the tools more widely. In this book, we find that the author is treating the in house journals as communicating tools with goal of re creating the personal feelings offered by the traditional firm. The massive labor unrest of the post war period made the companies understand that re injecting personal elements into workplace would help the management to control the labor. In house journals attempted to humanize the workplace

through their content and approach. The employees are also invited to submit their views in the journals. Informal profiles of interesting individuals also started to be included. Yates states that the values promoted were more clearly self serving on the part of the management. He says, a successful in house magazine had to 'sugar coat' its attempt to instruct. So, the personal and entertaining elements make the process of education in managerial values more palatable. Actually, the contents of house-journal improve the morale and co operation between the workers and thus reinforce the control on them. This is how Yates have described house journal as a tool of the management to control the workforce. That is how: it is proved from the above-stated information that house journals are considered as an effective tool for internal communication. But, there is very little research work on House journal in Indian Perspective.

With the changing time and technology, the organizations have also changed their mode of communication to get in touch with their employees. In this study the content of different house journals published from India will be analyzed. The comparative content analysis will help to understand the pattern of communication and nature of organizational communication and how it differs from organization to organization with time.

The selected samples of In-house journal are mentioned below:

- **Hexagon- Vision 2017 (February 2017) of Eveready Industries India Ltd, Published from Kolkata.**
- **Bobmaitri (February-March 2016) of Bank of Baroda, Published from Mumbai,**
- **Ecc Concord (Oct-December 2011, Volume- 34, Issue- 4) by L & T Construction, Published from Manapakkam, Chennai,**
- **Indofil Hilites (October- December 2010) by Indofil Industries Limited, Published from Mumbai, Maharashtra.**
- **Brown Coal (July- October 2009) by Neyveli lignite Corporation Ltd. Published from Neyveli, Tamilnadu,**

- **Energy News (January 2008) by University of Petroleum & Energy Studies and Indian School of Petroleum. Published from New Delhi.**

First of all, if we go through the content of all those in-house journals we can find a common factor. Each of those in-house journals contains news or information on some obvious topics.

Those are-

- Messages from the administration,
- Various achievements and activities of the organization,
- Future plans and policies of the organization,
- Recognition of the employees for their professional excellence or any other reasons,
- Messages to employees- formal messages on the activities of the organization or social messages like congratulating employees for their marriage or new born babies or mentioning their children's achievements etc,
- Creative and informal space for employees,
- Entertaining section in the journal such as photographs, riddles, teasers etc.

Now, the findings from the study will be discussed in brief.

First of all, it is very much clear from the study of different house journals of different organization that every organization- be it a manufacturing corporation, financial institution, or educational institute – gives importance to house journal.

After thorough analyzing the content it can be said that the house journal helps the organization-

- To disseminate the message from the administration to the readers and thus create a bridge among the authority and the important public,

- To display the achievements and various activities of the organization to the readers,
- To convey the future plans and policies of the organization,

Each of the roles is fulfilled by a good house journal. That is why; an organization considers the house journal as very important. For example, Sample 2, Bobmaitri, the house journal of the Bank of Baroda, contains the message of the Managing Director and CEO and Executive Directors in it. Sample 4, Indofil Hilites or the house journal of Indofil Industries Limited contains the message of the CEO & President in it. These messages are considered as the message from the administration. These help its public to understand the plans and policies of the organization. Thus, the organization uses house journal to convey the messages from administration to the readers.

The house journal is also used as a good platform by the organization to display its achievements and various activities. Referring to Sample 1, Hexagon (house journal of EIIL), it is seen that the house journal contains information on activities of different plants in Kolkata, Noida, Haridwar, Chennai etc. For example, activities like Quality Month celebration, Visit by DGS & D Auditors in the plant, education career counseling even news on annual picnic or cricket match is published in it. Sample 6, Energy News, the house journal of University of Petroleum & Energy Studies and Indian School of Petroleum contains information on the opening of the new campus of the University at Rajahmundry in the state of Andhra Pradesh, news of arrival of a team of delegates in the University. Even the news on celebration of teacher's day, fresher's party is also published in the journal. Sample 3, ECC Concord, the house journal of L& T construction carries the information that L & T Construction has received Zee Business Awards for the best construction firm, Manapakkam Campus of L&T has got the award for excellence in Water Management or it has been designated as the no. 1 on the list of the Top 30 infrastructure

Companies of 2011. Thus, it is very clear from these examples that the house journals are used by the organizations to display its achievements and activities. Again, house journals are also used by the organizations to disseminate information on its future plans and policies. Depicting future plans and policies of an organization to its publics is also very important for its functioning. This helps the public to understand the nature of functioning. It also helps to inculcate a particular corporate culture in them. The depiction also makes the public understand their importance in the organization and helps the organization to achieve its organizational goals with the support of internal and external publics. For example, Sample 1, Hexagon contains the company's future plans like to streamline the process of manufacturing and reducing the cost of manufacturing with a better standard, to create useful materials from the waste and to reduce 'environmental load' by reducing Carbon footprints and Zero discharge of ETP etc.

Sample 5, Brown Coal, the house journal of NLC contains information that the corporation is planning to venture into environment friendly projects based on resources like water and wind. The news of setting up of its 50MW wind based power project in southern Tamilnadu between Tuticorin and Kanyakumari districts. Thus, the examples help us to understand that the house journals also help the organization to depict its future plans and policies.

From these three roles, it is very clear that house journal is very important for the organization to maintain a bond with its publics.

Secondly, house journal holds a very important place as a disseminator of information. Each of the samples contains important information of the organization. For example, referring to sample 2, Bobmaitri, the house journal of Bank of Baroda contain the financial report of the current year it elaborate explanation. The financial results were not very positive for the bank. So, the articles

in the house journal describe in detail the positive and negative aspects of the results. The authority considers house journal as an important tool for dissemination of information. That is why; this house journal is published with the detailed information. For example, Sample 3, ECC Concord, the house journal of L&T Construction carries the detailed project report for its readers. Projects like setting up of Larsen & Toubro special steel and heavy forging division, Halol Godhra Shamlaji road project- their details, methodologies, limitations- everything is published in the house journal. In Sample 5, Brown Coal, the house journal of NLC India Ltd, the information like venturing into environment friendly projects on resources like water and wind, energy conservation in power generating stations or planning o publication of 'Brown Coal' in Tamil language is published for making its publics aware of the functioning of the organization. **So, it is very clear from the study that organizations consider house journal important as a disseminator of information.**

Thirdly, house journal is very important tool for employee communication. From the review of the past literature it has been found that employee of an organization also prefer to be informed about organizational policies and important information through printed publications. In this case, house journal holds a very important place for effective employee communication. For example, Sample 1, Hexagon is published with the name of the employees who got promotion in the organization, who have done good performance throughout the year (under the caption of Star Performer) and introduction of employees of different departments. It also contains a separate section 'Tete-A-Tete' which emphasizes on the identity of the employees as a family person, an individual with different hobbies, unachieved dreams etc. It also publishes news of employee's children's achievements in it. Sample 2, Bobmaitri also publishes the name of the employees who got promotion for their achievements. Sample 4, Indofil Hlites contains the

names of new joiners in the organization as recognition for them besides publishing the name of the employees for good achievements. Sample 6, Energy News, a journal of UPES, also publishes the names of the achiever students in it. Besides this, the journals also publish social data such as congratulating the employees for marriage, for their new born babies etc. Publishing these data, recognizing the employees by publishing their names, congratulating them for their good performances- everything actually helps the employee to feel a bonding with the organization. This bonding with workplace actually, enhances the capacity and enthusiasm of the employees. This also improves the morale of the employees which in turn gives positive result to the organization. Even this recognition helps to unite the employees also. That is how: house journal creates a common identity for the employees and foster a sense of 'we-feeling' among the employees or internal members of the organization.

Besides this recognition, the house journal also provides a creative space for its internal members. Every individual has a multi dimensional personality. A person who is working in a high rank of a financial institute may have a fantasy of drawing or writing poem. This house journal provides him the space to share his creative quality with others. Thus it helps the employee to satisfy the self actualization need of the employees and motivate them in their professional field. For example, Sample 1, Hexagon contains the photographs clicked by the company's Senior Officer- R& D, Regional service Manager- East and Senior General Manager. Sample 2, Bobmaitri publishes poem and creative articles of its employees. Sample 4, Indofil Hilites also contains creative articles by its employees.

Employees constitute the basis of the functioning of an organization. So, it is very important for an organization to give importance to effective employee communication. Every organization, its plans and policies, organizational goal can never be implemented and achieved without strong

support from the employees. From the comparative study, it can be said that house journal provides a strong platform for employee communication.

As a strong platform for employee communication a house journal-

- Projects the company's philosophy and value system in front of the employees,
- Inculcate the corporate culture amongst employees and other publics directly associated with the organizations,
- Explains the appropriateness of the company's policies and practices as related to various organizational objectives and activities,
- Inform advice, entertain and guide the employees and ensure the smooth functioning of an organization.
- Foster a feeling of harmony and mutual trust between the management and employees.

Thus, the study makes it very clear that house journal is a strong tool of communication for employees.

Comparative content analysis of different house journals helps to understand the different approach of different organizations in employee communication. The study of six different house journals of six different organizations makes us understand about their different approach. The overall treatment, appearance of the house journals, publishing and designing contents give the in house journals a special character. For example, Hexagon, in house journal of Eveready Industries India Ltd is not very formal in appearance. Rather, it aims to create a familiar, informal bond with its employees by giving emphasize upon building a common identity of them, by recognizing them for their work and treating them as an individual instead of treating them as mere employees.

Sample 2, Bobmaitri also recognizes those employees who have got promotions. But its approach is not same as the approach of Hexagon. Sample 2 has a very formal approach in communicating with the employees.

On the other hand, Sample 3, ECC Concord does not give importance to recognition of employees. Rather it is very much interested to build a separate identity of the organization. It stresses on the achievements and activities of the specific organization. This house journal is basically published to disseminate information on the organization rather than creating an informal bonding with its employees. Sample 5, Brown Coal, house journal of NLC India also mentions the name of its employees who attained the age of superannuation and congratulate them for farewell. But this house journal also has a formal approach while addressing the employees. There are many limitations of this study such as-

- Time is a major limitation to the study,
- In case of sample selection, there can be more diverse samples from different organization of different cities of our country,
- Awareness and acceptance of these house journals among employees are not covered by this study and other limitations as well.

These limitations leave space for more elaborated study on House journal form Indian perspective. But this is very much clear from the study that every organization gives house journal a special preference as a communication tool. Nowadays, organizations are changing its policies for house journal, such as, they are publishing e-journal other than printed publication. But, the importance of House journal as a tool of corporate communication will be always as it is.

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