



LIFE
WITH
PRINT

CORPORATE COMMUNICATION
IN THE MEDIA MIX



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DANIEL CASTELAO

PRESIDENT, SIGNI (MEXICO)



A GOOD PRINTED ANNUAL REPORT COMMANDS AUTHORITY.

What role do you see for printed corporate communication in a world of abundant media choice?

Printed media's unique qualities — such as the physical connection it provides while being held by the reader, the sensation on your fingertips as they go through the pages, the pleasant way you can read its content or admire high quality images are still not surpassed by any other media. Online media have taken positions that were once print's domain, but so far, printed media will still play a key role in any well-balanced corporate communications program.

Do you think companies and organisations will be as credible and trustworthy when they base their corporate identity on online messaging?

Credibility has more to do with content, timeliness, transparency and consistency than with any particular media. If a company understands its stakeholders, it will not lose its credibility by basing its identity on online messaging, but will risk wasting the unique benefits other media provide. It all comes down to offering your audience the possibility of choosing the right media.

Over 90% of major companies have their annual report online in the US. What is the future for the printed version?

Online annual reports have been around for well over a decade, and those who anticipated the end of the printed version are still waiting. The internet has promoted not the demise of the printed annual report, but its transformation from a financial reference document into a key marketing tool. We have borne witness to the flexibility of this document over the last few years.

This includes new products such as corporate responsibility reports, together with traditional format books. Although most have an online version, companies still rely heavily on the printed version to get their messages across. A good printed annual report still commands authority and offers the lasting qualities of a valuable object.

How can companies and organisations guarantee a high level of consistency between the different corporate messages when different media are used?

It is essential to establish a platform that accurately reflects the company's corporate mission, vision, core values and goals

— the way it wants to be understood — and determine the corporate language. This is the cornerstone of every successful communication program and should comprise a wide array of identity items, from a distinctive mission statement to the use of a specific color palette or font style. Each stakeholder's particular information needs must be identified; each media's limitations must be evaluated. Consistency is more a consequence of applying these elements to each piece of communication in an effective manner, than of the media mix used.

What is the impact of corporate communication on shareholder value?

It is evident that a clear, distinctive and consistent corporate communication program is a key component in any decision-making process when buying, selling or holding a company's shares. It comes down to choices and to facilitating decision-making. An investor certainly gains more benefit from a company with high-quality and timely information and that articulates its messages than from one which does not. This translates into a win-win situation for both the company and the shareholder: the main objective when designing and executing a corporate communication plan.