

SPEAKERS

Deepti, Charu

Charu 00:00

Congratulations to you and the entire team the lots of firsts in a short span of time first edition of prolog, new brand identity collaboration with Kunzum books to develop the culture of reading to upskill. And more. We will discuss all of this and more in the next 15 minutes. Welcome to Mrigashira.

Deepti 00:39

Thank you, shadow. Thanks for having me, and great to be here.

Charu 00:41

So the PR industry has come a long way in the last 30 odd years, right. For some of us, we have seen transition in multiple ways. I mean, I have memories of sending information to the media through faxes, which somehow never got delivered to the right people to locating people through Office landlines, graduating to emails mobiles. And there was a time when our approach was limited. But now our approach needs to be more 360 degree. So how is PRCAI working towards driving the future of the PR industry taking it to the new era?

Deepti 01:13

It's a phenomenal time for the public relations industry. And especially coming out of the COVID, we have really seen the value of public relations grow. We know that that was a time when advertising was shot, there was a lot of crisis to manage. And that was a time where we really as an industry stood very tall and very smart, we were able to really hold the timing well for our brands for our audiences, and really come and navigate out of that point in time. So as you rightly said, the population industry has changed significantly. I belong to it for more than 25 years. And as you said, that was a time when it was more about press releases, and meeting media rounds. But today, it's the digital first environment. And that's what has changed drastically. That's the expectations from clients from brands from ceo's so what's big changing is, is about the whole digital first approach for PR right. And what we do in that perspective as a PRCAI is that we have to embrace this change, we have to listen, we have to talk we have to speak together have dialogues. And that is what PRCAI really does, it brings the industry together. So this is a 20th year for Public Relations Consultants Association Of India, very strong foundation, it's a trade association was built to really take the causes further for the industry, and they've done good on that front. But with this new era, a lot of stuff is changing, right so we want to be more relevant, we want to be more inclusive, and that is the starting point of what's changing at PRCAI. So we are changing to bring more people into our universe, right so we have, we have about 100 members today. Primarily, those are PR agencies, but we are also seeing associate members, individual practitioners, digital agencies, measurement agencies being part of this universe. So the richer the base of this of this, you know, community is, better outcomes will come. So we are focusing on three pillars for PRCAI, growth, and inclusivity, which I just mentioned to you. We want to be a Knowledge Hub, we understand the key issues that our industry faces, and one of them be talent. So how we can do the right trainings how we can bring

certain programs which will benefit our members. That's the number two focus. And the third is about emerging as a think tank. And that again, is all about voices, opinions and dialogues and how do we work along with our members to share with them what's latest, and share those insights and opportunities to discuss. And it's fantastic to this journey where we are moving towards growing this universe. We are also looking at how we are connected brand as you rightly said today. It's about how you perceive what you're seeing to be and how you are in the face of people to be able to understand what you exactly deliver. And that's about building a connected brand for us. We have great pace with our social media community. We have great pace with our new brand identity. We've just launched a new logo, which is very reflective of this changing world of PR where we have put the scene the communication the PRCAl the sea right, which is in the center, is the communication point symbolic of how the world of PR is now a wider world of communications, right, which is all about that progressive nature, the forward momentum, freedom of expression. And that is what PRCAl stands for.

Charu 05:25

I must congratulate you for a very vibrant logo. It really has some great vibes to it. We are looking forward to some of these interesting things from PRCAl and I think recently PRCAl prologue spotlighted some of the new trends such as taking it to the future was weaving trends with millennials and repowering, ethics and communications through a day long event. Tell us more about some of these upcoming trends. How can communicators upskill to be future ready?

Deepti 05:53

So proloc was really a great opportunity to bring, like we had about 20 speakers together, we discussed where everybody is talking about meta was right. But we brought a group of people together, which is all about the future of PR. So just not met blockchain, crypto and other elements of this, which will be important. And as PR communicators, we need to have a very good pace of understanding this very quickly. So that's one of the key trends that we see that how can you use these newer technologies to creatively tell the story, right, and that belongs to the number one trend that I'll talk about is, which is digital first, right? So in our world of communications, it's no longer you know, just traditional PR, it's old now to get what we call earned overweight, right. And that's really taking today with the kind of technology, the tools and new things that are developing, because clients today are expecting, integrated, you know, campaigns. So making use of these technologies, being digital first, bringing those content pieces, bringing the ideas, which are rich with all these elements is going to be a continued trend. It has been for some years, but how we are using new technology, or new approaches to the Digital First is something to look for. So today, I don't think so any pitch goes in just as a PR pitch, right it rarely goes in as an integrated pitch. So that's the number one trend that we will tie to the second trend we talked in prologue was about insulin meals, it's fantastic to see the great the innovation, the opportunity that you know, younger audiences can bring today, you know, and how content can be created from a different prism different, you know, different lengths really, to be to be talked to be short, and how do you really attract audiences. So that is the second thing that it's worth looking at how millennials for instance, the millennials, their consumption patterns are very, very different. So we really need to understand the pulse of those audiences. And that's what we talked about, into our sessions about the millennials. The third was about the ethics, right, which will always stay for us. We are the custodians of corporate reputation. And I think that is not nobody can take that away from this world of public relations. And we need to keep building on to that. So these are the trends that shadowy, covered at furloughed, but there are broader

trends that are being that's something that we should be watching as we move in this world of communications. So we definitely talk digital first. The second I feel is a trend of the value of PR I feel that it has grown multi fold, especially after the COVID days, we have just commissioned, you know, a research and results and quantitative has just been, you know, finished has just finished, but we will be looking at deeper on the qualitative results also of it. And that is just showing some early trends to say how CEOs today are highly valuing PR, right so they have seen what it can deliver and what's the opportunity and it'll be great to see how this continues for the next couple of years. The third trend is really about you know, the talent piece. We know that it has challenges, but we also see that there are opportunities because manpower today is coming beyond VR colleges for instance, there is specialization happening and clients expect that so if you want to deliver high quality you really have to have customized offering to be able to meet the specified It needs. And lastly, I will talk about the importance of regional right? We eat languages, the way you're going into tier two, tier three cities, that is really coming very strong as a PR trend. So, in summary, I feel just kind of the umbrella trend, which is bringing what the value of PR together is today, we are beyond a standard campaign tool, we are a problem solving tool and a strategic tool, which enterprises are leveraging with our skill sets?

Charu 10:39

What you've said is sums up everything very beautifully. And you know, the point you made about customized offerings to clients. And it's such a beautiful point, because all these years, I mean, having been associated with the industry for over 22 years, and this is talent has been a constant been servicing standards continue to be a constant rain with clients. And instead of getting better, we seem to be still struggling with it. So when it comes to talent, where do you think we as an industry are going wrong?

Deepti 11:17

That's a very good question, Charu, and it's a very deep question that cannot be answered first and foremost, like very quickly, it needs such big introspection, introspection on what is right, what we are doing. What we are not doing right. Is, is a big question. Right? So we have to address that. But where I feel there are some fundamental gaps, which is causing this for instance, we hire people from the PR Institute's right, but they aren't enough. That's number one. Right? So people who are given this kind of knowledge and skill development at the early step, I don't think so we have enough of those to feed on what our industry needs today. Number one. Secondly, there is this opportunity, as I said about customization, which means we do not need the standard skill, you know, so today, we hear that people want to hire finance MBAs to really do financial communication. So are we really thinking five steps ahead that how are we preparing for those kinds of needs, for instance, to even meet a need of a former client, you need somebody with that kind of an experience also, and that a typical PR college will not give right? So I think that we have to address that at multilevel layers grow the pool of the PR Institute's or at least more batches to do with start finding new a hunting grounds, right? Because if those Institute's can't do enough, where do we find that talent? Third, to give higher quality expertise and customization to clients? You got to think about what else? You know, what's that new opportunity that the whitespace as I may call, that, we need to create a specialized talent and specialized suites of the of the clients and wave to get that. So as I said, it's a deeper introspection questions. Nobody has an easy answer. That is what we have to address. Secondly, very, very important to do all of this, we really have to evangelize our profession. And that is what we have to tell people, a lot of people in public relations land by chance. And I think that's what we need to address at certain level, it cannot be by chance you have to inform them,

what does it take to be a PA or good PR professional? And what do they do to prep themselves to deserve that title? Right. So if we really do great education on that front, I think we'll do a better job. And we are still in a very early thought process at PRCAI. But we are trying to rally and build stronger relationships with Academy, we are calling it the academy 2.0 outreach, where at least we can start by an education process. So that's where and this won't happen in a year or a month and there is no time we have to keep be consistent to communicate what this profession is all about. So that people enter, well informed, like an engineer knows that if I want to be an engineer, I have to give this kind of hard work to be the best engineer. Similarly, our profession needs to understand what it takes. People want to enter this to understand what it takes to deliver that and really grow upskill constantly. The other thing you know, like an EN it's for other professions as well. But very importantly, our world is changing very dynamically. We are today a global communication community, right? I mean, a news breaks internationally. It impacts us here something breaks here. It impacts international math. Okay, they're their foreign journalists, they're Indian journalists, we all have to work together as a community skills, technologies, everything is changing. So how are we constantly upskilling? So be it agencies be HPR Civ it corporate communicators, I feel everybody should really have a very strong training budget. Right? Because if you are thinking training, then you will be able to upskill constantly, and really, you know, build a very strong workforce.

Charu 15:32

No, absolutely. And, you know, the point you made about evangelizing our profession, I think the larger problem lies there. And I know of enough instances where people come into the profession, thinking, and they have different expectations and what they get they seem, it seems to be a complete expectation mismatch. And then they want to just get out of the profession. And I think we need to figure how are we handling and treating our interns? How are we handling Junior most members, the account executives, what is the kind of work we are giving them? Are we helping them with their growth, because most often, we tend to, you know, unconsciously give them the worst kind of work which, which does nothing for their growth, which is important, but we need to figure out how do we how do we get different kinds of people to do that work? And how do we find a way where we are able to get our interns, educate them better, help them grow up, there has to be some way of trainings like you said, for specially for at all levels at multiple levels, which helps people not just evangelize a profession, get a better understanding and deliver better. So yes, this is such great stuff, which is coming up, and I'm so excited about it. And actually, PRCA had launched this India's first accreditation program and Indian public relations, ai pr for public relations professionals, which is the also what is objective of that program, how we professionals benefit from it.

Deepti 17:01

Sure, so this is called extradition, Indian public relations. And this is the first ever certification that has that we launched in February of 2022. And this is addressing one of the problems Ciara we just discussed, the entry barriers to our professions is very, very low, right? People come from different fields, they haven't necessarily studied. And sometimes they learn on the job. And I think I must compliment as well, we do learn on the job, right? So as you rightly said, you're given an intern and responsibility, but the good interns are nurtured and cultured to take on additional responsibilities. But what ai pr does is it provides a common lens. So it has two levels of testing. One is an aptitude test, which is a 90 minute test where you they really test you on your analytics, your English, your, you know, various kind of skills into

this, you know, kind of a stress test environment where you rarely have to do these 100 questions in a couple of minutes, right? And then those who make it and qualify go for this jewelry rounds, which where they present an idea and the concept, right. So this was launched in February, as I said, we had about 70 people who came into the first batch, about 50% of them qualified off, you know, from the first round of the aptitude test, and couple of others went through, you know, the Judy route, we put jewelry, again, in this in this program, which was very diverse, so that you could look at a candidate from different lenses, right, so you had an HR person in jewelry, you had a brand communicator in jewelry, you had a CEO of an agency in jewelry, and you had an academicians, people who had taught some of them, you know, we're seeing the oh, I taught this person five years back, you know what, coming back into this round. So when we did that, 18 of them qualified. And we have a first batch of ai pr, who we just facilitated at prolog, you know, last month. So it was fascinating to see that how we, you know, could bring this group together, which we now know have a standard skill, right? And if they can put that on their CV that they are certified by PARCI, we exactly know what we are going into correct with this candidate. So that is what we want to do. We want to scale this, you know further. So while it's a it's a win opportunity, it's great for us as an association to be certifying a standard skill process. For the candidates. It's wonderful because it's a real test of nerves. It's a real test of capabilities and skill. So the person is motivated if they win that. And it's not an award. So it's different from an award when you know, you have worked on a group campaign. This is your individual achievement, and that is what's fascinating about it. And I think thirdly it does good rate for the industry, right? Because when you are taking to the client that I have a team of, you know, I have a 50 person team certified, there is a confident that generally can be kind of accomplished with this opportunity, right. So we all are seeing a great corpus of workforce coming together because there is a standardization and certification process. So we are very excited, I would encourage many more who are listening to your podcast to consider this we are we opened up for level one and level two, which was ranging between one year to 10 years of experience, we're going to come up with more levels. But again, repeat of level one and level two. And the good thing is this time, you're gone go out just not to the agencies, but even corporate communicators, individuals who can take these tests and get a certification for themselves in this process,

Charu 20:53

This is fantastic. Now you know, it's really making me feel that Oh, my God I wish we had some of these opportunities, even like one part of these opportunities which are there, which PRCAI is putting out today such exciting times ahead. And I'm sure this is just the beginning. Thank you so much. They were talking to us on Mrigashira. Pleasure having you.

Deepti 21:13

Thank you so much Charu and I urge all the listeners to please go to the PRCAI website. It's www.PRCAlorg.RG it's just in its face of development. But look at us see the opportunity feel free to reach out to me at CEO at PRCAI dot o RG and I just want to make one commitment that if you are part of this group, you're not just growing yourself you're growing many others so I urge and invite everybody to become a PRCAI member. We are this community and let's digitally let's physically we have through events and relationships, you know just grow, grow. Thank you so much.