

Corporate blogs must maintain their credibility

By Guillermo Armelini
e-business Center PwC&IESE
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Using blogs as effective ways of brand building is definitely on the rise among top companies. However, this practice also presents its own set of pros and cons. Among the cons is the real potential to lose control of the message. Given that the *blogosphere* is a communication space that companies cannot totally control, there is always a chance that their products can end up taking on negative or undesired attributes. It has become commonplace to see a brand take on its own life and its own meaning. However, the *blogosphere* increases propagation speed as well as the amount of information available, thereby increasing “noise” and making conversations uncontrollable. Given that blogs allow for real time dialogue, the situation can become fairly unpredictable. Another fear brought about by the *blogosphere* involves the generation of undesired feedback or even open defamation. As such, the greatest risks posed by corporate blogging come from the off chance that a few unsatisfied clients might enter comments reflecting their unhappiness or that employees might anonymously reveal classified information they are privy to at work. These risks are forcing companies to define their blogging strategies very clearly.

Maintaining Credibility

Not all of the dangers are external. Lies and corporate blogs can create an explosive mixture that, when it blows up, can seriously damage a company’s credibility. Despite this, cases continue to arise, sometimes affecting the most prestigious brands. Such was the case in 2006, when Sony Computer America launched its blog titled, “*All I want for Christmas is a PSP*”. The content was supposedly written by Charlie, an adolescent who related the marvels of this new video-console. However, a few days after the launching, it was discovered that the blog’s domain was actually registered under the name of Zipatoni, a leading viral marketing company. Thus, it became clear that the blog was fake. The news spread like wildfire on the Internet, and Sony was forced to recognize its fraudulent behavior and publicly apologize. The year before, Vichy had been required to issue a similar apology concerning its blog, “*Journal de ma peau*”, meant to promote its “MicroAbrasion Peel” skin product. The reason? Claire, the alleged user who was documenting her experience with the product turned out to be a phony. She was nothing more than an invention of the company’s marketing department who posted positive propaganda.

These are just two well-documented manifestations of a problem that appears bent on repeating itself despite the negative consequences suffered by the companies in question. The most recent incident occurred this February, when Business Week revealed that the supposedly independent Patent Troll Tracker blog that criticized the dubious practices of lawyers specializing in patent registration was actually being generated by Rick Frenkel, a lawyer employed by the telecommunications equipment provider, Cisco Systems. Who

will be next? If your company's corporate blog is running this type of risk, take corrective measures now! Prestige is difficult to earn but easy to lose. This is especially true in the case of corporate blogs.