Shaastra Application for endeavor / engage coordinator

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Q1. What are your opinions about PR and Branding in the context of Shaastra? Explain to us how PR is similar or different from publicity.

**PR and Branding in context of Shaastra**

Branding is centered on creating an identity. Whatever we do under the name of Shaastra, either during the fest or on its behalf, contributes in building its brand.

In my opinion, we can further the building of the brand of Shaastra by spreading more awareness about the fest itself and the work or social and environmental initiatives undertaken by Shaastra. Also our initiatives should to be better organized, managed and more impactful. Social networking serves as a very useful tool in the same. We can have popular pages and those organizations with whom we have associations share some select Shaastra posts.

PR of Shaastra is how we, under the brand of Shaastra, communicate with the public (via organizations, companies, individuals) and media. It involves establishing and maintaining a positive public image by presenting the overall operation in the best light possible. Thus the PR deals we make should be such that the public gets a good insight into the events, activities at Shaastra and also the impact Shaastra has, directly or indirectly.

Therefore, evidently, the public relations of Shaastra definitely contribute in building the brand of Shaastra. Few strategies for improving PR are elaborated in the answer to question 3 (online strategies).

Another strategy, which in my opinion will help enrich the PR scenario of Shaastra and the extent of tech activities we carry out, is exhibitions. We need to have better exhibitions showcasing technology – by companies, groups of students- at IIT M and outside IIT M, quality projects or innovations developed by other university/ college students, maybe even invitations to sister IITs. The exhibits can include CFI developed projects (depending on whether we are ready to bring them out in the open, i.e. patents have been issued or not and other such logistic constraints). Exhibitions were the talk on Techfest FB page in the reviews section.

**Publicity and PR**

Publicity is used solely for drawing people’s attention to something or someone. It can be good or bad. Doing something which causes a huge buzz about an event, exaggerating beyond the actual situation, can drum up large publicity for the event, although it’ll be bad publicity because it makes false claims and will harm the reputation and brand of the organization.

PR focuses on more than just public attention. The intent in public relations is to accomplish an organization’s stated goals by sending strategic messages to the appropriate audiences in hopes of impacting their knowledge, behaviors or attitudes. PR manages the overall reputation of the client while simultaneously building relationships among all of those who are affected by it.

**Example:**

In the past two years, the Pledge-a-Book campaign has been a huge success in terms of PR. The campaign helped build relations with the society, linking the potential minds of our nation in dire need of books via the campaign team and NGO’s to the target audience (the book donors). Donations by popular and well known people such as cricketers Sachin Tendulkar, Yuvraj Singh, Ashwin, the living God of Tibet- Dalai Lama to name a few. The campaign garnered publicity as well as good PR thus contributing in building the brand of Shaastra.

**Another example**, would be, I have seen some new fests, say a literary fest or a smaller version of the tech fest, in institutes having already established cultural and technical fests, post memes for publicity. Although this is a good publicity stunt due to the popularity of memes, usually it is bad PR, as memes are made in a way displaying sarcasm or in a mocking manner.

Q2. Choose one college festival like Techfest, Saarang etc. Please do a thorough SWOT analysis on PR campaign ideas from your chosen festivals. Clearly identify the objective of their activity, the duration, collaborations and logistics constraints involved.

Using their PR activities now as a blueprint weigh our strategies against the chosen festivals.

I have chosen **Udaan**, an initiative by Alcheringa, the annual cultural festival of IIT Guwahati.

Udaan is a **yearlong initiative** of the fest.

Their major partners include World Vision India, Ashadeep, Aditya Birla Group: premium global conglomerate. Clearly they have partnered with organizations having name and experience in the relevant field as also those who can provide significant financial support.

Prayaas: an educational initiative under Udaan. Along with encouragement, children are taught so that they possess the basic skill set necessary. A curriculum is designed especially for them which includes Basic mathematics, other useful things which will benefit them (such as making useful things out of available stuff thought of as waste i.e. kind of recycling).

However, the more popular part is the **2-4 day campaign** under this yearlong initiative, in which students from IIT G and other colleges also participate in conducting various workshops for the underprivileged children in villages, orphanages, special care homes, slums across 50+ places in the country.

The basic objective of this 2-4 campaign is bringing a smile to their faces, inspiring them and igniting a hope in their hearts.

Depending on the rules and extent of interaction allowed by the visited institution, they conduct various workshops- educational, motivational, entertaining (such as dance, singing, and drawing) or simply spending time with them and playing fun games.

They had tie-ups with NGOs and local socially involved communities in a few places, and in these places the volunteers would follow up with the children for a longer period of time, providing them guidance and mentorship.

Major constraints faced were the lesser number of volunteers than required and lack of experience in dealing with special children.

The campaign has helped garner PR for the fest by its reach to many zones in the country, bonds with the local communities and NGOs, mouth-to-mouth publicity and thus coming in the view of the media. Besides facebook and twitter posts, there are videos on the alcheringa youtube channel, and there have been articles in newspapers as well. In some institutions, stationary items were distributed among the children. Ideas, for example, distribution of calendars highlighting the Udaan theme, although simple, have an impact and is a nice way of enriching the publicity as well as public relations status.

**Strengths**:

Work under Prayaas- very significant attempt- an effort is also being made to get scholarships for these students. Thus automatically garners attention and establishes good image. Implying positive PR generation and enrichment of PR scenario.

Collaborations with the NSS teams of other colleges and socially aware and active individuals and/or groups of people in some places aiding in both short as well as long term initiatives and activities.

**Weakness**:

As a large part of the volunteers conducting the campaign in parts of the country which are distant from IIT G are the students of the institute itself, there is no assurance that every year a volunteer from a particular city will be a part of the campaign.

**Opportunities**:

Increasing the contacts and tie-ups with NGOs or other groups in target places (which will help in overcoming above mentioned weakness) with the help of already established PR and brand of Udaan. Thus making visits as frequent as once or twice a month (besides Prayaas) at a larger number of places than at the present number. This will help further enrich the PR scenario as it will gradually come under media vision. Thus it runs like a self-sustaining cycle.

Although the campaign is a good and impactful one, their publicity and PR strategies are not very strong. Likewise is the case for Shaastra.

Shaastra is stronger in terms of associations with NGOs.

Yet, one good strategy would be to form associations with NSS groups of other colleges. Also to build contacts with interested individuals/ groups who are or would like to be involved in such activities and campaigns, whether it be about funding or volunteering.

Q3. Shaastra is well known for its Facebook page. But as the internet era grows faster than we can keep up with, other online avenues have opened up and presented themselves to us for example twitter. Identify a few more such online avenues, tell us why you chose the same and go on to illustrate how you feel it can be exploited to the fullest.

To bring the **Facebook Page of Shaastra** into the notice of a larger number,

We can bond with other popular and well-known pages as also those of our sponsors and associated organizations, as few of our competitor festivals do. These pages already have a sufficiently large number of followers. If these pages share some select posts of ours and we get mentioned by them, we can reach out their followers also and this could help us increase our Facebook likes.

Although I haven’t worked out the details, **a few such pages Shaastra could attempt to bond with, are**:

* MTV Campus Diaries (~351k likes).

Mostly liked by college junta. [Antaragini and Techfest have also bonded with it (either in the past or currently also) for widening their target audience]

* Campus Diaries (~150k likes).

Again mostly liked by college junta. They have liked many other facebook pages and usually their posts are concerning the work and talent of students.

* Being Indian (~4063k likes) and Youth Ki Awaaz (~320k likes).

Very popular pages. Mostly share only really significant stuff among social activities. Could be used for sharing the posts elucidating the work done under our theme-based campaign or our PR campaign.

The other potential online avenues are:

**Twitter**:

* We can start appreciating the fellow fests on their significant achievements by mentioning them and their activity in a few of our posts. Even if something goes in an undesired way, we do not generate much harm. So, to the point the strategy is:

Make positive mention of them in a few tweets implying extension of reach to their followers too (as it would appear in their news-feed). Ensures larger visibility for Shaastra, all the more better if the fest shares our posts related to them or we can get them to do that. We will be straightly targeting all their followers.

* Also posting the ongoing science activities to keep the page and feel of the fest alive, and constantly on the minds of the people.

Meetup:

Social platform for organizing local groups around specific interests.

* Not much used presently but can be useful in PR campaign handling, activities in a particular zone as:

Allows members to find and join groups unified by a common interest.

Facilitates offline group meetings as well in various localities.

Clear and smooth communication can be carried out aiding increased effectiveness and ease in working.

Designed as a way for organizers to manage the many functions associated with in-person meetings and for individuals to find groups that fit their interests.

* Also for enriching and increasing participation as well as competitiveness in specific events, workshops in Shaastra.

The service is free of charge to individuals who log in as members. They have the ability to join different groups as defined by the rules of the individual groups themselves. However, the organizers have to pay some revenue to Meetup.

The website and associated app also allow users to contact meetup group members through a messaging platform and comments left on individual event listings.

**LinkedIn Pulse** (now integrated into LinkedIn):

Serves as something between a blog and an outlet for the best stuff (filtering content also involved).

* Great for sharing of new ideas.
* Also for keeping up with thought leaders in industry. Can be used for gathering decent content when considering increasing frequency of fb and twitter posts.

**Instagram**:

Online photography platform. Very popular and trending these days. Easy, quick and interesting for most junta. Allows sharing on FB as well as twitter.

* Contests in association with already established pages.
* Posts for science, environment and society related issues. ( I have observed the other competitor fests doing this in greater volumes than us at Shaastra on FB)

**You- tube channel**:

Currently a bit dry. What we can do:

* Increasing the number of videos, adding more striking/ impactful videos illustrating the work done in the campaign, activities and events at Shaastra, maybe excerpts of the lecture series. (Techfest gathered more PR by posting lecture series’ videos)
* Smart and effective mention of links to fb page, twitter links, linked in pulse and meetup in the video.

Also if it seems that maintenance of so many social networking platforms would be difficult, then we can have one blog – on this blog we will present content creatively with a Shaastra touch. Content can include articles, photos, reports, posters about the current significant ongoings in science and technology at different colleges, or developed by researchers and companies, and Shaastra posts - activities in relation with the initiatives based on the Shaastra theme, the events at Shaastra, also posts featuring envisage, etc.

As the blog will be newly started, we will have to mention it on our other already well known social networks, such as FB, every time we post on the blog, until our blog get a good number of followers of its own.

Also, we can have an **E-newsletter** based on a survey on the number of subscribers for it.

The e-newsletter would be sent on a monthly basis to the subscribers from August or September to January, i.e. 5 or 6 months prior to Shaastra.

* One column in the newsletter could be ‘Shaastra over the years’ – a story to tell, highlighting a flagship event or a charity event organized by Shaastra in some year, one in each newsletter. It could also serve as a timeline showing how Shaastra evolved over the years.
* Another column could have an amazing fact/ achievement of ours, like ISO certification or a Limca Record.
* One page could cover what is trending in science and technology around the globe currently. It could cover any discoveries in science or launches in technology. It can also cover various new projects initiated/ completed all over. More like the TOI page 3 to make the point clearer.
* On one of the pages, one column could be ‘Science and Society’ or ‘Bridging the Gap’ - between Science, Environment and Society highlighting the initiatives taken in fields, for example, Clean Technology, Combating pollution, Energy Solutions.
* Finally we might have one or a half page featuring the highlights of the blog over the month, for those who couldn’t keep track of the blog activities over the month. I’m not very keen on this idea though. It’s just a suggestion and we could analyze the pros and cons to decide whether we should have it or not.
* As pre- Shaastra events or activities come up, they will get a special mention in the newsletter, giving information about the event/ problem statement, registration details, incentives, etc.

As time progresses and Shaastra approaches, we can publicize our events in the newsletter. We shall present it in an interesting manner, say presenting a sample Tidbits question or a big data challenge question. Precisely how the website presents different events, in a similar fashion. We can provide the event links on the website and Facebook/ twitter page link as well.

If the number of subscribers is low, or our every month turns out too hectic a task for our team upon analysis, then we can send the Shaastra newsletter delivered to all institute students pre/ post Shaastra to the blog subscribers as well via email.

Q4. As the team responsible to represent the face of Shaastra to the external world consider the following case study. If the theme for Shaastra 2017 is chosen to be “Sustainable Development”, elucidate various theme based initiatives (primarily on ground) which we could do to aid us achieve what Shaastra has decided to stand for. If the theme is too big to chew, consider taking a smaller slice like Children’s Education or Clean technology and show us possible activities under the same.

**Underprivileged Children Education**:

How do we do it?

We can identify and work with the disadvantaged local communities first, sensitizing and educating them about the rights of children to help them understand that children are meant to be at school and not work.

Initially we will start on a smaller scale, working with few children. Then gradually expand.

* We can map out-of-school children, street children and those who are involved in child labor or simply ones with no education, children of daily wage workers, single parent, etc. and facilitate their movement into schools by the means of enrolment drives.

We will keep track of their progress and provide them necessary personal attention, guidance, academic help and mentoring.

* We could design a campaign like Prayaas, although an improved version working out ways to overcome their weaknesses while doing extensive brain storming and making our very own campaign unique in its respects.
* We could start a weekend mobile-school by renting a mini-bus or a van.

The major requirements would be a couple of volunteers, a balanced curriculum of academics and engaging activities, and a small van that can double up as a classroom when parked.

We will identify an area which has high concentration of poor children (usually slums in your city) and take our mobile-school to that area every weekend. We can also try to organize outdoor events for these children in some nearby ground. The target could be the catastrophic 2015 December rain affected families in and around Chennai.

Case Study**:** Mukti Gupta has started a successful mobile-school in Kolkata. Mukti Gupta started an NGO ‘Help Us Help Them’ which reaches out to street children through a school on wheels.

* For vulnerable children above 14 years of age, if not education, we can organize skill-based vocational trainings and prepare them for dignified employment opportunities.
* As the mission progresses, we could form Children Groups bringing together those children in a locality or community. These children and their parents are now capable of collectively working out solutions to help themselves and each other and ensure child rights in their area are upheld. We shall work very closely with these Children Groups and train them.

**NGOs working on such initiatives:**

* Smile Foundation India
* Help Us Help Them
* Teach for India
* Make A Difference (MAD)
* Pratham
* Barefoot College- India

**To enrich the PR scenario**,

We can adopt PR strategies or (PR stunts) such as:

* We can have online/ offline poster or logo making competitions open for all based on the theme of Shaastra or more specifically based on the (onground) initiatives under the theme and adopt the winner’s symbol/ logo as logo of the campaign. Or maybe we could just include the logo on our posters of the campaign.
* We can have online article submissions open for all higher school and college students and the incentive can be the winner’s article appearing on the official blog.
* We can invite ideas or small projects from higher secondary school and college students concerning sustainable development. The winners get to exhibit their project during Shaastra. Presenting their project at IIT M and taking back a certificate home under the Shaastra tag, when promoted in its full appropriacy , should be enough an incentive for good participation.

**Some of the colleges carrying out such projects/ implementing innovative ideas that could be invited are**:

* + NIT Warangal, NIT Trichy

NIT Warangal an Innovation and Incubation Centre under which students carry out such projects. Problem statements are also provided. Similarly NIT Trichy also has such a centre.

* + B. V. Bhoomaraddi College of Engineering and Technology, Hubli, Karnataka

(Automobile and Instrumentation Engineering mainly)

They have received media coverage for following:

-KLE Tech - BVB Wins “Ultra Golf Kart Championship (UGKC) – 2016”

-KLE Tech-BVB Wins National Championship in Hybrid Vehicle Challenge-2016

- Fastest eco-kart 2015

-BVB has won 2nd, 3rd & 4th Prizes at prestigious Bosch Inscribe-2015 Technical Idea Presentation Competition held yesterday (24th November) at Robert Bosch, Bangalore.

<http://www.bvb.edu/>

* + Saint Joseph College of Engineering in Sholinganallur (on the outskirts of Chennai)

The link that led me to believe that this college also carries out such activities is: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/Engg-students-innovative-ideas-win-recognition/articleshow/4974004.cms>

* + Also we could invite institutes from other parts of the nation, this will widen the range of Shaastra. For example,

We could invite Institute of Technology, Nirma University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

They have won Robocon India multiple times- in 2015, 2014, 2011, 2008. Their students also carry out innovative or I-bot like projects under idea cell.

<http://www.nirmauni.ac.in/ITNU/idea_Lab>

* If we want to take it to the next level, we can have an app development competition regarding sustainable development. This will involve coding, app development and tech enthu junta all over as it presents a challenge to them and also will spread awareness and generate PR. Infact, this could be an event in Shaastra itself, held a few months before Shaastra. Thus knowledge of the fest will start spreading a few months before the fest itself, and we also gain out of it for the campaign, besides PR. It can be promoted on the Shaastra blog, as also on the various social media such as our FB page, twitter and other ones we plan out for Shaastra 2017. E-newsletters can be very effective.
* We can organize a walking/ running/ cycling marathon for Chennai people, or more specifically the areas around the institute itself, within the institute campus to spread awareness about Sustainable development or rather the campaign under it.

Q5. Shaastra must not only be an online platform to post fancy and interesting content but also must be an organization which creates huge impacts to the society. Keeping this in mind the PR Social scene for Shaastra 2017 is set along the lines of “Child Welfare & Rehabilitation”.

Suggest ways in which you feel the PR scene can be enriched, with respect to the suggested boundaries.

Under child welfare, a possible campaign that can be undertaken is

**Child Protection**:

Inspite of all the legal impositions, around 13 lakh children in India are still under the bonds of child labour. This in itself should be enough reason for us to take a step forward, and contribute our bit towards improving the lives of these children.

How we can contribute to child protection:

* Map out these children with the help of NGOs, local enquiries, surveys, records, etc.
* Form children groups- bring together vulnerable children in a community/ area. Explain the problems and harms of the work they were doing. Then help and train these children to collectively work out solutions to help themselves and each other. Gradually make them aware and train them so that they themselves ensure child rights in their area are upheld.
* Through NGOs, corporate funding help, etc., by means of enrolment drives, enroll them in schools, or make arrangements for provision of basic education, at the least, literacy.
* Or if not that teach them certain skills or help them recognize and/or enhance their talents that’ll help them live a dignified life in future.
* Building children's resilience and supporting their participation in their own protection, including child-led organizations and child-to-child support.
* Supporting the development of community-based care and protection systems (in association with NGOs) depending on the constraints we face at our level.
* Another major aspect that we can try to accomplish, although a real task, is to coordinate with the district level authorities to ensure right implementation of laws so that children in the area are kept safe.

A more specific initiative we can take for Shaastra 2017:

After the rains in South India in December, there may be many such families who have not yet recovered from the devastation caused in their lives. We can identify such families, children of rickshaw drivers, vendors, lower- income families, and slum kids. We can see to it that they don’t become child laborers or drop out of school. Those who have dropped out of school, we can make efforts to re-enroll them into schools and provide for their basic education requirements. The ‘mobile-school on weekend’ idea can be implemented with these children. We can spend time with them and engage them in re-creational activities, or teach them certain vocational skills appropriate to their age. Slowly we can train them so that they are aware and capable enough to protect themselves against any malpractices and ensure their safety and protection.

**To enrich the PR scenario**,

Besides the PR strategies (and/or PR stunts) mentioned in Q3 and Q4, we can adopt the following:

* During Shaastra, on one of the days, we can have a short session, filming the video clip of the ideation, approach and implementation of initiatives and activities, and maybe a short speech by an eminent social worker in the field.

This could include just our PR campaign or the initiatives and activities pertaining to the theme Sustainable Development, basically the Q4 initiatives as well.

**A few of the social workers in this field whom we could invite are**:

1. Dr. Shyama Chona

She was awarded the Padma Shri for her efforts in the field of education, in addition to twice being the recipient of national awards for her efforts for the handicapped in Tamanna-the special school which she founded. Anubhav Shiksha Kendra (ask) is her dream project aimed at bringing quality education to disadvantaged children through afternoon school. Based on community participation, it is a slum children's school with a difference.

1. Prof Rajani Paranjbe

Professor (Mrs.) Rajani Paranjpe, a professional social worker, co-founded the Doorstep School – a school for the education of underprivileged groups of the society, out of a passion for children and education. Many of these children are the ones who were forced to drop out of school to work or care for younger children. She has a Master’s in Social Work and is a retired Professor, having taught subjects like Indian Social Problems and International Social Welfare. She has held posts at both the College of Social Work, Mumbai (also headed the research in social work dept here), and the Shikoku Christian University, Japan, and has more than 20 years of teaching experience.

1. Kiran Martin

An Indian pediatrician, social worker and the founder of Asha, a NGO working towards the health and community development of around 50 slum colonies in and around Delhi, reaching a reported number of 400,000 to 500,000 slum dwellers. She was honored by the Government of India, in 2002, with the fourth highest Indian civilian award of Padma Shri.

* A well-presented section in the E-newsletter as also the post Shaastra newsletter along with posts on the social media pages. This section has already been elaborated in the answer to Q3.
* We can also adopt the poster/ logo making competition idea and online article submission as in Q4.
* The crowd funding following the marathon in Q4 could be based on the initiative of this campaign. If we could get any of the NGOs involved with the campaign to be present at the event and help too, then this might help increasing PR.
* Also another important point is that, we need to make everyone in the institute aware about the campaign fairly long enough before Shaastra and also give them a decent idea about the work being done. It is very important that the students as well as campus residents know about the campaign.