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Opinion - Advertising

Communication tools

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When Swami Vivekananda went to Chicago for the world religion conference, few knew him in that country. His plain demeanour and simple ways made people perceive him as another saint from the land of snake-charmers and black-magic. With utmost difficulty, he could get few minutes to speak in the conference. He opened his address with "My brothers and sisters of America". The audience immediately broke into applause and the 'man' went on to speak for days. His mesmerising words were able to transform the way Western world, in particular, looked at India. His words made people look at him and at India with a lot of respect.

Communication has that power to transform people's perception and ignite their energies. Mark Antony's famous funeral speech 'Friends, Romans, Countrymen...' in the epic play *Julius Caesar* by Shakespeare is another classic example of strategic use of communication.

Attracting talent

Today, recruitment advertisements have changed from a plain announcement of vacancy to a strategic corporate communication tool. They do much more than merely announcing a vacancy. On careful study, it is found that recruitment advertisements use the marketing principle of 'positioning'.

'Positioning' is defined as an attempt by the marketer to create an 'image' of the product brand or service in the minds of the customer. The same strategy is used to create recruitment advertisements, the only difference being that the marketer is replaced by the recruiter and the target audiences are the prospective applicants/employee for that organisation.

The whole communication strategy revolves around attracting talents in this competitive market, where irrespective of downturns, recession and job-cuts, talent is always at shortage. Four types of 'positioning strategies' are being used in recruitment advertisement:

Career positioning: The advantage with this type of positioning is that the prospective applicant does not only look at the job at hand, but is also attracted by the career opportunities that a company promises.

Employee positioning: Through depiction of photographs or interviews of present employees, a kind of image about the kind of people who work for the company and the experiences they had working for the company is created. Right positioning may create an urge among applicants to earn the same identity and profile.

Workplace positioning: Today's employee does not only look at the job or its remunerative aspects alone. The work culture and workplace environment also plays a critical role in decision-making. This explains the need for workplace positioning.

Corporate positioning: A famous detergent advertisement of yesteryear depicted a lady quizzing how her friend's sari is whiter than her's. Comparison is at the core of human tendencies. When competitive jobs are on offer, candidates often compare the corporate brands and image. Hence corporate positioning plays a crucial role. Not all advertisements use all four positioning strategies. Recruitment advertisements may use one, more or all four; using all seems to create maximum impact.

Sending the message across

Effective communication has four integral elements, other than just sending the message across — first, the message should be transmitted without distortion; second, the recipient should understand the message (right decoding); third, there must be no misunderstanding; and, finally, the recipient must engage in the action intended by the sender. Retaining all these elements of effective communication, the addition of two more elements — usage (right time, place) and multiplicity (ability to use multiple message for same effect) — makes the communication 'strategic'. Recruitment ads, today, have the same strategic leverage.

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