How To Adapt Your Communication Strategy to the Chinese Market

Simon Vericel, 13 October 2015

A project funded by the European Union
Get Ready for China!

The EU SME Centre is an EU Commission funded project which helps EU SMEs prepare to do business in China by providing them with a range of information, advice, training and support services.

The Centre is implemented by a consortium of six partners and was established in October 2010. It successfully completed its first phase in July 2014 and has now entered its second phase which will run until July 2018.
Please continue to submit your text questions and comments using the Questions Panel.
Simon Vericel, Founder and Managing Director, Influence Matters

Simon has more than 10 years’ experience designing highly efficient influencer and stakeholder engagement campaigns for leading Chinese brands overseas, global multinationals in China and tech startups experiencing rapid growth. He has a particular focus on B2B, corporate communications, strategic positioning and messaging, media relations and crisis management across all traditional and digital platforms.

Over a decade working in China has given Simon a unique perspective on the key factors for successful communications campaigns in the country that translate into increased awareness, reputation and sales.

His industry focus covers high tech, mobile, semiconductors, IT services and software. Simon also have deep experience in healthcare, automotive, energy, F&B, government, finance and sports.

Prior to starting Influence Matters, Simon was General Manager of the Beijing office of American Tech PR boutique agency Racepoint Global for three years, and spent seven years before that in the Beijing office of global PR giant Hill+Knowlton Strategies.

Simon hold a bachelor in business administration from the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.
• Why should you care about China?
• A very different communication environment
• Huge media landscape
• A giant intranet
• Where should you start?
• Key learnings
Why Should You Care?
Big Numbers

- 1.4 Billion people
- 50%, and growing, in urban areas
- 172 million middle class households (67%)
- 1.22 million mobile phone users
- $9.3 billion spent on 1 website on Singles Day 2014
- China is
  - The **largest** economy in the world
  - The **#1** exporter
  - The **largest** market for VW, Luxury goods, Apple…
- On track to become **largest** cross-border ecommerce market
- Economy still growing at **7%** yoy
What does that mean for you?

You already have clients in China

Did you know it?
A Very Different Communication Environment
They Speak Chinese!

- Hello
- Bonjour
- Ciao
- Hallo
- Hola

你好
A Wide Media Landscape

- **National and local media**
  - 3000+ TV channels
  - 900+ Radio stations
  - 7000+ periodicals
  - 5000+ newspapers
  - 2 major newswires
  - Countless online media
  - Media centers are Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou (tier-1 cities)
  - Tier 2 and 3 cities have local papers edited in the millions
  - Trade and industry press crucial to B2B communications

- **International and regional media**
  - Most of them are based in Beijing and Shanghai
  - All media represented in China – TV, print, newswires, online, radio
  - More than 700 journalists from over 350 foreign news organizations from around the world accredited in China
## Internet is Changing Media

### Before
- Fully controlled under the CPC to ensure news consistency with government policy and opinions
- Consolidated into large media group under ministry of propaganda
- Paid to attend corporate events
- Non competitive
- Do not speak English
- Not confrontational, but…
- Patriotic

### Future
- Private and public, news strongly guided and controlled by government
- Private media groups with much more influence
- More private media refusing payments
- Looking for exclusivity, breaking news
- English speaking editors
- Tougher, in depth questioning
- Still patriotic
A Separate Internet Ecosystem

- 600+ internet users
- Mostly mobile
- Heavily censored
- Many western media website are blocked
- Connection to the outside internet is slow
- Facebook, Twitter, Youtube blocked
- Equivalents for each platform exist in China
Have You Heard About WeChat?

- Built by internet giant Tencent
- 600 million monthly active users
- 1.1 billion registered accounts
- Chinese people spend an average of 40 minutes a day on WeChat
- 50%+ open it more than 10x per day
- 10+ million public (company or celebrity) accounts
WeChat for the User
WeChat for SMEs

Static and Interactive content to deliver news, such as animations, videos, pictures

Tailored outreach to specific groups of followers such as customers, media, students, etc.

Customer Service with automated and tailored responses to enquiries, sales Q&A

Statistics and user data on followers and their interaction with each content

Interactive menu-bar custom-designed to fit the company’s needs
A Word About Compliance
Keep Your Message in Order

- International companies are often singled out and challenged by authorities for compliance reasons because:
  - Too strong dominant position
  - Strong technological advantage
  - Faulty products / recalls
  - Appearance of not complying with China law
  - Appearance of not acting for the China greater agenda
  - Public discontent or rumors
  - Political disagreement with country of origin

Adapt your messages to show support and care for China!
Where Should You Start?
Adapting Your Strategy to China

Keep informed

• Keep an eye and ears open on what is going on in China in your industry, for your competitors, and for regulatory changes

Don’t wait

• Take ownership of your brand message and communications in China. China will not wait for you

Map your audience

• It’s a big market, identify your priorities (geography, demographics, government offices, etc.)
Adapting Your Strategy to China

Think local, be local

- Localize consistently, and seriously. Do not only translate
- Seek the support of experts: Either hire local as you enter the market, or work with experienced professionals
- Validate your localized brand and messages

Build local communities

- Whether B2B or B2C, communities drive a lot of influence in China, good relationships with communities can help avoid trouble
Executing Your Strategy

- Define manageable goals and develop targeted campaigns matching them

  - Driving awareness in China
  - Ramping up credibility with product designers
  - Build legitimacy in business, investor circles
  - Raise awareness about partnership opportunities
  - Build customer engagement

Set a content development and dissemination strategy for each goal defined
Elements of a Campaign

- Start building a relationship with local influencers by delivering compelling content on a regular basis via media and social media channels.

**Brand and Stories**
Identify messages and developing local stories to turn into compelling pieces of content supporting the objective of each identified goal.

**Media**
Set a Chinese press bureau to keep informed on trends and influencers, and build a relationship with key press titles via the dissemination of the stories through media interactions.

**Social Media**
Set social media properties to amplify the results of media and disseminate less formal, easily shareable, informative contents designed to convert followers via a social media hub function.
And Remember:

Be Local!
Get Ready for China

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