



26 & 27 April 2012 PUDONG, Shanghai, China

Dr. R. L. Bhatia, Founder, World CSR Day

Interview:

China is changing on a scale, and at a pace, that has never been witnessed before. By 2020, it will be the world's largest economy. This is presenting companies with unparalleled opportunities, and unprecedented challenges. It is not simply that China is changing, China is changing the world.

Colin Currie, Managing Director, adidas Group Greater China has responsibility for one of the largest areas within the adidas Group. He recently presented on "The China Challenge" at the Asian Marketing Effectiveness Festival 2012 at Shanghai.

Dr R L Bhatia, Founder, World CSR Day posted a few questions to him.

1. What will be the 3 major challenges of CEOs in the next 3 years?

With uncertain economic volatility, CEOs will need to put increased focus on business efficiencies to preserve profitability.

Staff retention and capacity building will be critical. For adidas, this means grooming talent from within our organization while working together with our customers to improve retail operations.

Customer satisfaction, coupled with speed to market will also be key. Consumer tastes change rapidly, particularly in the sports casual wear category.

Brand will also be very important – both in terms of protecting it, and maintaining visibility. The global market will be increasingly competitive and building mindshare, particularly in the digital age, will be challenging.

2. What according to you are the New Paradigms in Marketing which will impact an organization's decision to reach out to the consumer?

Unquestionably, social media. Young consumers are increasingly going digital with instant sharing of ideas, looks and trends. Consumers are now empowered to create their own form of media. This represents a huge opportunity for any company to create an engaging online community to tap into this growing segment.

The other paradigm shift comes from the increasing importance of customization. Consumers want an increasing say in the design of the product they buy. That means we need to be able to market not just the product, but the process of personalization. It's fun – but it's more complex!

3. Are there new competencies that the modern-day CEO is faced with in building his or her brand?

As mentioned, building and protecting the brand will be critical. As we know, a brand takes years to build, but can be destroyed in seconds. The CEO will have to be "all seeing", staying on top of social media and 24/7 news, to ensure the brand is protected.

4. Are there challenges to adidas to marketing in China? And how different are they from other countries?

The major difference is sheer market size. Consumer spend has been increasing – not just in the wealthier Tier 1 cities, but across the country. The growth of the middle class will come from China's mid-lower tier cities. At adidas, we have spent a great deal of time researching and understanding the needs and desires of consumers and tailoring our products accordingly.

5. For a CEO, what will be the role he/she has to play in shaping the destiny of his or her organization through CSR?

I believe one of the key roles is ensuring any CSR program is authentic to the company. We've launched a number of CSR programs which involve employee volunteerism and have received tremendous feedback from our staff who now feel more engaged and empowered in their work and in their community. Our volunteerism programs such as the adidas Right to Play Child Development Program or the adidas Migrant Children's program is just one reason why adidas is an employer of choice here in China. When launching our various community investment initiatives, we not only make sure that they are authentic to the adidas brand's heritage and identity, but also make sure that we can proudly stand behind these programs and show how they have made a difference to the communities we work in.



Colin Currie
Managing Director
adidas Group Greater China