

Preparation crucial

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go beyond message strategy and to look into presentation, platform, timing, audience and so on.

Evaluation

CEOs who prize competent communication will, more often than not, take the time to evaluate their performance. They are open to feedback and are pragmatic enough to self-critique.

Such CEOs will ask observers to tell them how a presentation went, what issues were raised, what body-language reactions were evident and what speculation went on, on the sidelines.

Communication is a complex science because it is behavioural and relates to social interaction. It is not a precise technology. In order to be competent communicators in today's era of "talking heads", CEOs need to be made aware of their communication strengths and weaknesses.

Studies have found that Fortune 500 CEOs spend up to 80 per cent of their day communicating in one form or another.

CEOs of public-listed companies in Malaysia are finding communication a growing challenge.

As businesses cross borders and take on increasing scope and complexity, the task of explaining business growth to various stakeholders becomes correspondingly sophisticated. As one PR practitioner used to say: "It's different strokes for different folks."

Not one message suits all. Yet, there must be message consistency.

One of the most challenging communication environments has to be facing the press. Press conferences and TV interviews put even the most competent communicator to the test. Nevertheless, there are unconscious communication competencies in us all — competencies that have been built even as we first learnt to speak.

Awareness of these competencies and a willingness to improve on them are what is needed. Being a conscious communicator is the first step to being a competent one. **E**

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