

Sustainable and Successful Innovation Communication Campaigns: Leveraging Branded Events and Layered Publications

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Abstract:

This paper will show how effective communications strategies can be devised for promoting awareness about innovation and best practices via a combination of competitions, awards, publications, research and effective branding. Based on the regional competitions and awards for use of new media in South Asia, this talk will give examples of online and offline publications along with a meticulous jury process to showcase best practices and emerging innovations. The Manthan and mBillionth awards in South Asia are based on the jury process of the World Summit Awards (WSA). The broad-ranging awards and authoritative publications together constitute periodic benchmarks of innovation levels, which can reach a wide audience if properly branded and evangelised. Tips, roadmaps and resources will be provided, based on the speaker's ongoing book series.

I. Introduction

Two major areas of business and social innovation in the 21st century are the Internet and mobile media. They have become independent sectors in their own right, but also form the foundation for a range of innovations in government, healthcare, civil society, education and global trade. The impact of these innovations has been traced in a number of publications (see References section for full list).

The great hope of ICTs (especially from the 1990s onwards with the rise of the Internet and mobile media) has been that they would radically spur efficiency, effectiveness and innovation in socio-economic activities. All of this is actually true. Unfortunately, during the hype of the dotcom boom, these promises got distorted in many ways. It led to the belief that geography was dead, size and established brands did not matter, e-marketplaces would replace traditional markets, and developing countries could immediately compete on par with developed economies. A number of donors and civil society organisations plunged into "ICT4D" (ICT for development) activities led largely by technology and not local needs assessment or innovative service generation.

The reality today is that technology is not entirely cheap. Launching ICT initiatives can also lead to new risks, such as lack of sustainable models and even online fraud and viruses. Legal mechanisms for digital IPR (intellectual property rights) are not yet in place in many parts of the world. Activities ranging from healthcare to trade depend on

trust; and trust depends on relationships. Relationships are still important and have not been entirely replaced in the online world.

This does not mean that there are no more opportunities for ICTs -- far from it. Some ICT interventions have quantifiable impacts on efficiency via changes in productivity, costs, errors and human resource inputs. They may also have qualitative effects such as richer interactivity in telemedicine via multimedia content instead of mere textual content. ICT interventions can also facilitate innovative approaches to problem solving which were not conceivable or feasible in the pre-ICT context (these in turn can be radical innovations or incremental innovations).

Some ICTs can have all three kinds of impacts: efficiency, effectiveness and innovation, while also introducing entirely new kinds of risks (eg. computer viruses, challenges in dealing with ICT tools that rapidly become obsolescent). At a higher level, it is also important to see how ICTs can be made sustainable and scaleable. This requires workable socio-economic business models not just at the level of the individual project, but in terms of scaling up to higher-level programmes and national-level policies. Competitions and awards held at the city, state, national, regional and global levels can spur such innovations across society and connect innovators to peers around the world.

II. The Role of Competition and Awards

Awards are an integral part of technology, performance and cultural excellence. The innovation communication (InCo) community can improve benchmarking, education and outreach opportunities via a regular branded competition and research reports on innovation.

Competitions and awards for best innovations and innovators can play an important role in:

- i. identifying and nominating prospective innovations
- ii. evaluating and assessing appropriate innovations
- iii. rewarding and promoting the best innovations
- iv. validating, inspiring and gratifying the winning innovators
- v. connecting innovators with peers in innovation communities around the world
- vi. connecting innovators with investors, policymakers, researchers and educators
- vii. inspiring other innovators to win similar awards in their careers
- viii. inspiring youth and broader segments of society to becoming innovators in future
- ix. transferring knowledge between jurors and innovators
- x. transferring knowledge between jurors and local hosting communities of awards.

III. The World Summit Awards

At a global level, the World Summits on the Information Society were the first United Nations-endorsed multi-stakeholder forums focusing on the key role of ICTs (information and communication technologies) in 21st century society. These were also accompanied

by the World Summit Awards, held every two years at a global level, to nominate, assess, award and promote the best ICT innovations.

The World Summit Award (WSA) is a global activity to select and promote the world's best e-Content and most innovative ICT applications. It offers a worldwide platform for all who value the creative use of ICTs. WSA is based on a unique mechanism of a global contest supported by national selections of best practice and a sequence of content-focused national and international events, content conferences and promotional exhibitions.

WSA was initiated by Austria in 2003 in the framework of the United Nations' World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and is organised by a global partner network, coordinated by the International Centre for New Media. WSA partners come from governments, private sector and civil society in over 160 UN member states.

There are also the WSA Road Shows, organised and conducted on a national level and coordinated and supported globally by the WSA office. They support capacity building in a region, demonstrate the achievements of local content producers, and encourage entrepreneurship and knowledge exchange between countries. Over the last two years, WSA has supported events in 5 continents and over 20 countries.

The Awards have enthused and inspired innovators from a number of countries around the world, as summarised in Table 1. Innovators attest that such awards help validate that they are on the right track, they bring a sense of pride and victory to the innovation teams, they can connect with other award-winning innovators, and the awards bring them publicity and buzz in their home communities.

Table 1: World Summit Awards Impacts on Innovators

Entrepreneur	Testimonials about WSA Award
Elad Daniel from Mamaherb.com	Being back home our whole team - Mamaherb.com and related companies - were boasting with pride. We were very happy with the UN's official recognition we got to our effort.
Jeremy Friedberg from Genomics Digital Lab	A remarkable event celebrating creative minds from across the planet!
Frank Vrabel from Newstin	It was absolutely fantastic to meet all the bright people who are driving the innovations in a global scale!
William Then from Integrated Court System (ICS)	Winning the WSA is a benchmark of the quality and impact of our products and our capabilities. We are very proud of it and it's a big confidence boost. I was honoured to be there, among the world's best. Winning WSA really

	motivated and energised us. It has proven that we are a world class team building world class solutions!
Eduardo Roman Cisneros from uTour	Certainly this award has opened some doors. It was a good experience, and not only winning the award, but having the chance to know other people, their ideas.
Filip Meuris from MyMachine	We left the WSA with enlightened spirit and above all: Ambitious. The WSA set our agenda for the next two years. We received national attention from general press, educational press, business press, and government publications!
Stephen DeMuth from A Journey into Time Immemorial	Being reviewed and judged against so many others places us on a much higher plane, we can refer to awards such as this in our promotional media and convey to clients the quality of work we deliver.
Petra Rietsch from EDysGate	The winning was and is an important dissemination activity, it supports the acceptance and by this the exploitation of the product. And it supported our application for the extension of the project successfully!

IV. Categories of e-Content Innovation

Health, politics, business, science, education, culture, but also entertainment — these are the most crucial social issues of everyday life for everybody. WSA National Experts are asked to nominate from their country one product or application of innovative use of ICTs in the following categories:

1. e-Government & Institutions

Delivering complete services in public administrations to individuals, businesses and organisations combined with organisational change in order to significantly improve services and democratic processes and strengthen support to public policies; fostering quality and efficiency of information exchange; empowering citizens and public services clients.

2. e-Health & Environment

Developing the client-centered model of health care where stakeholders collaborate, utilising ICT, including internet technologies to manage health issues as well as the health care system; meeting the needs of citizens, patients, healthcare professionals, healthcare providers, as well as policy makers.

3. e-Learning & Education

Serving the needs of learners to acquire knowledge and skills for a complex and globalising world; transforming schools, universities and other educational institutions through interactive, personalized and distributed learning resources; creating active e-learning communities and target models and solutions for corporate training as well as life-long learning.

4. e-Entertainment & Games

Supplying digitised entertainment products and services; entertaining the user in this world's variety of languages and its cultural diversity; supporting movement from one-way to two-way, from single to multiple players, interactive entertainment and the synergy between analog and digital platforms.

5. e-Culture & Heritage

Preserving and presenting cultural heritage in line with the challenges of the future; demonstrating valuable cultural assets clearly and informatively using state-of-the-art technology; developing the diversity of cultures and sub-cultures and the multilingual nature of societies.

6. e-Science & Technology

Fostering global collaboration in key areas of science, and the next generation of infrastructure that will enable it; providing measures to promote and demonstrate scientific processes and make them accessible to citizens; scientific projects articulated through new media.

7. e-Business & Commerce

Support and optimisation of business processes; creation of new business models in e-commerce and m-commerce, business to business, business to consumers, internet security and other areas; supporting SMEs on the marketplace; using ICTs for buying and selling as well as servicing customers and collaborating with business partners.⁴

8. e-Inclusion & Participation

Measures supporting integration of the global information society; bringing least developed countries into the knowledge society; reducing "digital divides" between technology-empowered and technology-excluded communities and groups such as rural areas and women; bridging society and strengthening social and political participation of individuals and groups through ICTs.

Table II: 2009 WSA Awards Winners in two categories

Category	Winners	URLs
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e-Business and Commerce	Karma Currency Website (Australia)	www.karmacurrency.com.au
	AvaGuide	www.avaguide.net
	Remediation Check (Austria)	www.sanierungscheck.at
	Aweb (China)	www.aweb.com.cn
	Ngpay (India)	www.ngpay.com
e-Science and Technology	Water World (Austria)	www.vogel-av.at
	Newstin	www.newstin.com
	Fossil Web (China)	www.uua.cn
	Videlectures.Net	videlectures.net
	Genomics Digital Lab	www.exploreGDL.com

V. World Summit Awards - Mobile

New times bring new challenges. Today, in terms of access, mobile usage has outgrown Internet usage by threefold with more than 4.4 billion connections registered around the world to date. Mobile phones are becoming smarter, while touch screens are revolutionising what can be done with them. They are undoubtedly becoming more intimate and most used by all age groups across their life span. We can do more and more in using mobile phones with many essential tasks becoming unthinkable without them. We have simply entered the age of mobile applications and mobile content.

As a response to this rapid development and focus change on the content scene world wide, the World Summit Award has started the WSA-mobile. The new award has been launched in June 2010 and is dedicated explicitly to selecting and promoting the world's best m-Content (mobile content). A number of other organisations and countries also offer awards for mobile innovation, as summarised in Table III.

Table III: Categories of Awards for Mobile Innovation

Category	Awards, Organisation
Industry: Infrastructure	GSMA
Industry: Media	MMA, MEF, Games
Entrepreneur/Startup focused	MobileMonday
Citizen-focused, inclusive	WSA-Mobile, mBillionth; World Communication Awards
National	Malaysia (Mobile Malaysia Awards)
Vendor Awards	Navteq LBS Challenge

VI. World Summit Youth Awards (WSYA)

Specifically targeted at the 'digital natives' or youth of today, WSA has also created a special set of awards for youth for innovative use of Internet and mobile. It demonstrates young people's potential to create innovative digital contents and serves as a platform for people from all UN member states to work together in the efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

VII. Manthan and mBillionth Awards for South Asia

Inspired by the WSA process at the global level, South Asia has created a similar annual regional model called Manthan Awards (for Internet content innovation) and mBillionth Awards (for mobile content innovation).

The Manthan Awards were launched in 2004, by India's Digital Empowerment Foundation in partnership with World Summit Award, Department of Information Technology, Government of India, and various other stakeholders across South Asia.

The core objective of the Manthan Award process is making visible the contents that already exist and demonstrating the richness and innovation of content creativity to those interested in understanding and planning an Information Society.

The Manthan Award wants to demonstrate to every stakeholder the existing range of creativity, innovation and excellence in the use of the IT tools and communication networks. It attempts to consider that quality content, innovative applications and their production and economic sustainability are fundamental requirements which require changes to the way markets operate and governments act.

The mBillionth Awards address top innovators across South Asia in the area of mobile content. Together, the mBillionth and Manthan Awards have created an annual benchmark of innovation in the region, and hundreds of innovators have been inspired and awarded in this process.

VIII. Layered Publications

In addition to the excitement and buzz of the awards ceremony for innovators each year, the awards also lend themselves well to publications highlighting the achievements of each innovation, its uniqueness, the role of the innovators, implications for society at large, and messages straight from the innovators. This valuable information can be published via the news media, the awards organisers, or independent scholarly publications.

Each of the Awards mentioned in this paper is accompanied by an informative and slickly packaged publication of lessons learnt in each innovation round. Some of the organisers

also publish well-researched authoritative books about the deeper implications of these technologies, risks involved, lessons for entrepreneurs, and checklists for policymakers.

IX. Discussion and Conclusion

The examples in this paper show the wide and exciting array of activities in the awards process that systematically identify, award and promote innovation in society, particularly in the Internet and mobile media. It would be worthy to extend this UN-endorsed model to other areas as well, such as energy and healthcare.

A number of such awards exist across the world; the time is ripe now for the awards community to work together on the innovation front by building harmonised databases of awards and winners, and standardised processes for recognising awards in different categories. Best practices in innovation learnt over chunks of time (eg. 10 years) should be identified and clustered in thematic books.

The brand components of a successful innovation are not just its value and experience, but the process of validation and success, in which competitions and awards play an important role. In the 21st century, social media have emerged as a popular and effective way of circulating and validating information about emerging innovations. The social media mix of blogs, newsfeeds, social networks, wikis and tagging can effectively amplify the process of innovation globally and locally.

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