

## VALUE OF BOTH CONTENT AND CONNECTION KEY TO PR INDUSTRY

In conversation with *The Nation's* **Watchiranont Thongtep, Phot Jaichansukkit**, president of the Thailand Public Relations Association, gives an overview of the PR and marketing communications industry in the Kingdom after experiencing many crises in the last couple of years, and suggests how to deal with challenges that lie ahead in the next few years, particularly with the digital revolution in the communications industry and the advent of the Asean single market.

**What needs to be done in Thailand's public relations industry in light of the Asean Economic Community coming into effect in 2015, and what will the single market's impact be on the industry?**

From my 25-year experience in the marketing communications industry, I believe individual specialists and corporates already have high potential to compete with other regional PR firms once the AEC takes effect, as we see many of our PR experts are recognised by many international organisations, while several companies have won bids for many world-class events.

Basically, Thai people are creative and have imaginative ideas. This is proven and guaranteed by the many awards that Thai film producers and ad creatives receive from international contests like the Cannes Film Festival and the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity.

But when considering the country as a whole, what needs to be done is English communication skills development and practical training programmes for new graduates, while we find there is a lack of strategic communicators from mid-management to senior director level.

**Do you mean that education institutes should get more focused on designing multidisciplinary curricula and encourage students to seek further experience outside of school?**

Yes, of course. Even though some government and private universities are now trying their best to make it happen, it is still not enough for real demand in the market and to build the country's competitiveness. If we can create a good balance between practical and theoretical skills in PR officers in the industry, we could see more improvement in human resources in middle-level management.

**Besides such skills development, what qualifications should PR officers have to attract job recruiters?**

I would say here are two crucial things that PR officers or strategic communicators should have. First is the value of content or the story to be told. This content should be designed and developed from sincere truth for communication both to external partners – the press, investors and the public – and to internal partners like employees, particularly at a time of crisis. Importantly, having a single message is key.

In dealing with business uncertainty, the second point is the value of connection with the press, investors and the public. This connection means engaging with all related parties. Traditionally, building a strong customer-relationship management might be enough for feeling secure in business. But with digital marketing and social media becoming more influential in today's communication arena,



**PHOT JAICHANSUKKIT:** There are two crucial things that PR officers or strategic communicators should have: value of content and value of connection.

good PR officers should create their value of connection wisely through social networking with the press, investors and the public, and should apply digital marketing communication strategy properly.

**Regarding digital communication technology development, what are the changes in the PR industry?**

PR executives should understand the importance of this digital revolution as it already shapes new forms of communication as well as changes audience behaviour from passive content receivers to active content creators and generators on their own media,

namely Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest and Instagram.

So good PR execution should be undertaken and integrated properly via various forms: traditional and digital ways, online and offline media, and mass-media advertisement and on-ground activities, in order to create brand preference both in products and services, or even in personal relationship.

Through all the various forms of PR communication, I believe spending in the PR industry will see annual growth of about 20 to 30 per cent. PR expenditure accounts for 10 to 15 per cent of the Bt104 billion in annual advertising spending.