A Business Consideration on Providing Information: Company Social Responsibility and Concierge-like Information Provision

Akira Sakai

Kumamoto Gakuen University

1.　Preface

There is a large variety of digital media which is certainly changing our society, with the most representative being the Internet.　There are many kinds of information systems in our present society, such as cellular telephones and computers, and tremendous amounts of information are being produced and being used.　Most of this information is sent out by business organizations and influences people's social thought and life-styles in considerable ways.　Because of this, organizations are required to communicate in as accurate and rapid a manner as possible.

Of course, up to this time the main concern of a company or a corporation was to make profits or economic benefits, but the new method of determining the value of a company is reflected by the **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** scale which is in increasing use.　The information which a company sends out reveals both the value of the company to the receivers of the message, as well as the sender's awareness of their role in society through its services and products.　Companies are gradually coming to a better understanding of the importance of proper communication, but I think they must consider it much more strongly.

In this paper I will propose that the importance for a company to develop their CSR is through the adoption of a "**Concierge-like attitude**" in the sending of concise information.

2.　CSR and Communication

CSR refers to the attitude of taking responsibility for the harmonic relationships between distributors and consumers, companies and stockholders as well as businesses and communities.　The method of employment of CSR would naturally depend on the type and the size of the business.　As an example, the use of CSR by the company –K.K. Japan General Development Planning Center Social Incubation Cluster– is as follows:

　　–Produce only high-quality goods and services

　　–Be ethical in all relationships

　　–Be honest in financial dealings both with customers and the government

　　–Make all payments to all stockholders and the owner(s) on time

And to be much more proactive at :

　　–Promoting the company in a positive manner

　　–Being sincere and honest with customers

　　–Being concerned with employee's child and elderly dependent care

　　–Providing equal opportunity for male and female employees

　　–Showing concern for the environment

　　–Being active in community service and events

　　–Cooperation with NPG/NPO groups

　　–Taking action to improve world problems

as well as other concerns.

This company is pointing out the importance of energetically providing and showing information to improve the company's CSR.　Our modern age has shown that the value of a company's existence and activities depends on how information flow affects surroundings.　For example, a

company's philosophy and administrative policy, contents of activity, introduction of goods and services and IR activities such as discrimination towards rival companies, original appeal, environmental research publications, brand strategy, etc.

From these companies, data must be both speedy and accurate. One of the methods of rapid response to requests is through the internet and its technology. The minimum worth of the availability of information depends on three factors: Accuracy, Quantity and Timing. For these factors, using the proper communication technology is most effective. For example, such pre-existing media such as newspapers, TV and magazines can be chosen along with Internet technology such as WWW and E-mail or customized data-based techniques such as data mining, depending on the receiver of the message.

However, on the other hand, while the role of information technology is important, problems occur by attaching too much information, such as by companies which think first of their own convenience and force unilateral information on receivers, sending incomplete information or information which doesn't arrive due to security counter-measures.

These problems can be explained by the following key words:

Quality: unnecessary, unsatisfactory, misleading

Quantity: too little, too much

Timing: delayed, sloppy.

These communication errors give the impression of stinginess in the use of data transmission and thus tarnishing the company's image or a reduction of the business's reputation for trustworthiness.

Also some companies which depend too much on IT find that their vital information may be leaked out prematurely, concealed or changed in some ways. From these risks in IT, companies should learn positively

from their mistakes, not to overtrust the system and to take a proactive responsibility as a sender of communication; and so new guidelines need to be assembled by the IT industry. For these new guidelines I would like to propose the adoption of a "Concierge-like Information Technology".

3.　Concierge-like Information Provision.
3. 1　Definition of Concierge-like Information Provision.

The meaning of "Concierge-like Information Provision" is to reply to requests not only for the sender's profit, but also for the receiver's benefit or satisfaction with the added purpose of supplying additional helpful information in a responsible manner.

The original word "concierge" is French, meaning "the custodian of an apartment building", with the English usage used to identify hotel staff who provide guests with sightseeing information or arrangements, or a special department supplying local information. A company's role as a communicator then, is to provide professionally correct concierge-like information to its stockholders (and consumers).

Nowadays, among those selling service or small-bulk products and involved in price competitions with rival companies, practicing "concierge-like information provision" is to effectively give more value to the customer.   And in this practice, as compared to the old system of simply sending out advertisements, the business's image improves due to increasing trust in the company.

3. 2　Concrete Examples of Concierge-like Information Sending

We can now see from some practical examples that some common points exist, in that for a time the given information may seem unprofit-

able for the sender.

Department Store and Supermarket Examples

Most major department stores have arranged concierge staff (special advisers) to deal with various customer needs. For example, on the basement floor there are demonstrations of cooking and on goods which are only carried in rival stores. Also, every major supermarket such as AEON openly displays the ingredients of its foods including warnings of any potentially toxic chemicals, and there have been cases that show when distributors have brought legal action against distributors to have unsafe food removed from the stores.

Transportation Service Examples

Two well-known companies– Galileo and Sabre (in the U.S.) –are regarded as giving excellent service in airline booking costs, seating arrangements, hotel reservations, car rentals and other related information. In addition, three major Japanese domestic airline companies are represented on ［airline name].com (http://www kokunaisen.com) giving information on their own as well as their rival's timetables and costs.

Medical and Drug Examples

Now we will look at information regarding generic drugs supplied by small and mid-sized drug companies. These kind of drugs are the same as brand name drugs but the cost is only 60-80%, so while this still may give a fair amount of income for a clinic or pharmacy, it still gives substantial savings to the patient and has been watched with interest. We can see the reason why generic drugs are recommended by pharmaceutical conferences.

4.　Role of Concierge-Like Information Provision and CSR

4. 1　CSR and Concierge-like Information Provision

As mentioned, CSR and "Concierge-like Information providing" have several similar concepts, especially at the point of aggressively servicing new and worthwhile information.　To practice CSR it is important to take the role of a concierge fully for a successful realization.　And to introduce CSR and "concierge-like information providing" to the information society is a very essential technique of informationalized communication.　However it is better not to attach too much importance to a particular technique of "concierge-like information provision" as while that method may work for a particular stockbroker (or customer) it may limit your all- round practice of CSR.

4. 2　Making Use of Informationalized Provision With CSR and Concierge-like Information Provision

The development of useful software is a vitally important role for a company's "concierge-like information providing" and the improvement of informationalized processing techniques.　Software plays an important role in an enterprise's development and usage of information sending techniques with "concierge-like information provision".　With software at the center of a service support system the company's ability to apply "concierge-like information provision" on a daily basis is vastly improved.　High quality data sending is realized by careful selection of information to be sent, circumspection of other's information, customizing suitable information for users, selection of methods of sending various information while keeping quality, timing and taking responsibility for the accuracy of the information.　Now I will suggest a possible solution system and its affiliated subsystems to improve a company's information

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output.

This system utilizes software which supplies all necessary information as well as additional information such as the sender, delivery method, effective period and which company staff confirmed the information. Applying these criteria to the contents allows the instant ability to trace any fallacious data back to its source, thus improving the integrity and trustworthiness of the company. This solution system is composed of four subsystems: the Input subsystem, Information Management subsystem, Output subsystem and the Follow-up Survey subsystem.

Input (Gathering) Subsystem.

This IT subsystem's practical usage (dependent on equipment, staff and amount of investment) provides a data base on which to gather various kinds of contents. For example, via such available data from telephone, fax, PC, cellular phone, voice, still and active frame sources- along with the above mentioned criteria of sender guarantee of excellence, route and effective period to be able to check the accuracy of information indirectly.

Information Management Subsystem.

This system data-bases the input information adding any essential informationor filtering out the unwanted or outdated in the way we mentioned above. It also provides for data-mining techniques, manuscript support and the creation of new information uses. From here information is selected and produced before going to the Output system and to improve the integrity of the stored information-additional data from the Follow-up Survey system could be input.

Output Subsystem.

This system is used to supply information to other forms of media expression such as TV, newspapers, magazines, advertisement papers,

telephone, Fax, web etc. First by arranging an output information layout with summaries for each choice of text, pictures or website, and then by informing users of the available information and its timing. This method also allows information to be certified via the electronic authentication function.

Follow up Survey Subsystem

This subsystem provides an analysis of the effectiveness of the output subsystem through survey techniques. This data would be input to the in order to provide the contents a guarantee of authenticity. From these four subsystems, it is quite possible to create a more flexible system with the knowledge to select output from its size, its information equipment and its user I.T. level.

5.　Epilogue

In this report I have been explaining about how important it is for companies to use CSR techniques to provide information and I have suggested a "concierge-like information providing" system using a more receiver-orientated approach. Thus I have explained the outline of the solution system and subsystem.

An organization must feel determined to follow the CSR way of providing information and have an aggressive responsibility as an information provider. Although both CSR and "concierge-like information provision" have similar background concepts, the proper usage of "concierge-like information provision" is one method of realizing CSR. Thus it is important to introduce "concierge-like information provision" as a technique of sending information.

From here, selecting the companies that already take CSR and information providing as subjects－analyze each company's type such as business,

size, the information they already provide, etc, and then it will be necessary to test the validity of the style of " concierge-like information providing".   Also it will be necessary to discuss the most suitable method to create the software for the "Concierge-like Information Provision" solution system.