

Success dependent on innovation, organisation culture

So, yet another edition of WAN-IFRA's Conference in India is over. Although there was the Expo this year, it was a low-key affair with few participants. No comparison really to the Expo of 2007 which was a mega show at the Chennai Trade Centre with many suppliers and machinery and equipments spread over a couple of large halls. Perhaps, it is a sign of the times when the news publishing industry world over (and India is not too different despite print still doing well) continues to grapple with the dynamics of today's digital world.

It was for the first time that the regional summit of the World Editors Forum was held in India. Clearly, it's been a long and successful journey for the annual WAN-IFRA India Conference, possibly the biggest event in the news publishing industry in this part of the world. More than 400 delegates attended this year's event held at the sprawling ITC Grand Chola in Chennai – the ambience just right and the food turning out to be excellent. Being the 25th year of the conference in India, WAN-IFRA recognised the efforts of the people who laid the foundation and were instrumental in IFRA India's growth over the years.

Mention must be made of R.V. Rajan's years of sterling service to such growth, steering the IFRA India ship from inception to the time almost when WAN and IFRA merged in 2009 or thereabout. Managing relationships with publishers, editors and suppliers is not easy, but he did, also maintaining a healthy relationship with IFRA abroad. Quite exceptional really, when you consider he was at the time heading his advertising company (Anugrah Madison) and was at the helm at bodies such as the Rural Marketing Agencies Association of India, the Advertising Club and the Public Relations Society of India. As Rajan and I were exiting the hotel after the conference, he said that the years he had spent at IFRA were some of the best years of his career.

One of the areas where WAN-IFRA scores is research. Not very long ago, there were what were called the IFRA Flashlight Reports (on citizen

journalism, the Android platform, etc) with which I was associated. Helming the initiative was Manfred Werfel, now WAN-IFRA deputy CEO, and the formidable IFRA editorial team headed by Kerry Northrup and Dean Roper. Under Roper's leadership, WAN-IFRA in recent times has produced several significant reports. Two reports just hot off the shelves are the World News Publishers Outlook 2017 and 'Reality check – making money with Facebook'.

World News Publishers Outlook 2017 examines what top media executives around the world consider to be their greatest priorities, threats and opportunities. It is based on the results of a recent annual survey of news media decision-makers worldwide by François Nel, who also wrote the report, and Coral Milburn-Curtis of the Innovation Research Group, a partnership between researchers at the University of Central Lancashire and the University of Oxford. One of the key findings of the report emerged when respondents of the survey were asked: What is the single most important risk to your news organisation's future success? The largest number of respondents/executives answered: their organisation's reluctance to innovate. When asked what is the single most important change that has to be implemented in their news organisations over the coming year, the top response (21 per cent) was Organisational Culture. Seventy per cent say that during the coming 12 months, up to 30 per cent of their income should come from non-traditional media activities if they are to reach their financial goals. And seven out of 10 respondents expect that during the next five years, more than 30 per cent of their firm's income will need to come from diverse revenue streams if they are to be successful.

The introduction to the report on Facebook monetisation strategies, authored by Grzegorz Piechota, researcher at Oxford Reuters Institute and Harvard Business School, is on page 33. It may be worth taking a closer look at the report in one of our forthcoming issues.

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