

# Rahim Ladha explores the human side of PR and the power of words

*PR in Canada's Top 40 Under 40 award-winner offers insights on the forces that have shaped his path in the communications profession.*



## **What's the single most important piece of advice you've ever received about working in PR?**

The best PR minds that I have had the good fortune to know all possessed a combination of 3 qualities that have been instructive to my own career path.

The first quality is integrity; demonstrating the ability to uphold your values and principles no matter the circumstance. As PR leaders, our reputation as honest, trustworthy advocates directly impacts our standing with those whom we serve and the audiences that we work to reach.

The second quality is empathy; a constant recognition that at the heart of every story - good or bad – are people whose lives matter. I've learned the importance of identifying the humanity in every story, and how our actions as PR leaders in the face of success or failure must drive to a greater and shared sense of purpose.

The third quality is fearlessness. My favorite mentors

always nurtured my sense of curiosity and frequent inclinations to challenge conventional wisdom. Empowered PR leaders can be culture-setters and change-makers. I've learned that you need a healthy dose of audacity and uninhibited imagination to counter-balance the pragmatism of our job.

## **What do you find are the most challenging and the most rewarding parts of your job?**

PR leaders operate in a media environment where trust is difficult to earn and the truth can be even harder to discern. Amidst this backdrop, the greatest challenge I face in my role is to navigate my company through the perils of this environment with confidence and clarity. Building meaningful connections with our audience in an atmosphere where cynicism often prevails is a never-ending challenging.

I have been fortunate enough to be charged with leading corporate philanthropy for my company; a task that brings me the greatest satisfaction. This role allows me to invest my company's resources and

know-how in service of causes that make a lasting difference to people's lives. A partnership that I have initiated with Habitat for Humanity is helping to deliver better living conditions for families in need, while breaking new ground on environmental standards for these homes so that they are built for the decades ahead.

### **What does the future look like in PR?**

I believe that the PR leader of today and tomorrow has to be intimately immersed in the world of technology. Our content and distribution channels are predominantly digital and the technology that powers both is evolving at a frenzied pace. Getting closer to our customers will require PR leaders to get even closer to the innovations in information and communication technology that enable those connections to occur.

Advances in AI powered by big data are disrupting every industry and will also have a profound effect on both the nature of a PR leader's response to moments of crisis and the timeliness of the response. There must be an embrace of these technologies to keep pace with the speed of today's social media-driven news cycle and the spotlight that this inevitably places on a company and their reputation.

### **What would you say to people learning PR now and aspiring to become a PR professional?**

Work hard to make writing one of your exceptional talents. In a job market that is deep with educated people seeking a career in communications and PR,

the exceptional writer will always have the advantage. Our words will be used to build relationships with customers, move global markets, and influence public sentiment. The ability to convey your ideas, through writing, with confidence and competence is a powerful skill.

I would also stress the importance of lifelong learning. Our industry is changing so rapidly that keeping up with new technology advances and emerging trends has become a requisite part of our profession.

### **Who do you look up to for inspiration?**

I am blessed with the most amazingly creative and diverse group of friends and their presence in my life is a constant source of enrichment. Their experiences inspire me to think and dream in ways that I never would in isolation. My friends also challenge me to see sides to a story that I might've been blind to. That diversity of thought and perspective makes me a better professional and person.

### **Do you do anything specific when you're having a creativity block? What do you find helps you?**

I've developed an odd solution to helping me get back on track when my brain goes numb. In the living room of my condo I've set up a podium wired for surround sound and I'll step to the microphone to deliver a rambling performance that only my poor dog could appreciate. There is something effective about hearing the cluttered voice in my brain amplified aloud that magically restores my train of thought!



### **RAHIM LADHA, Vice President, Corporate Communications, Bentall Kennedy**

*Rahim Ladha is a communications leader with 15 years of experience in a variety of settings including multinational corporations, government and state-owned enterprises. In past and present roles, Rahim has held the primary responsibility for protecting and enhancing corporate reputation and representing the public relations and business interests of organizations and their executive leadership in the media and broader marketplace.*