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<th>AMIC-PATA Asian Tourism Communicators Training Workshop : Singapore, Jun 8-9, 1992 : [foreword and preamble]</th>
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Foreword and Preamble
FOREWORD

The idea of preparing this manual was mooted as part of the Asian Tourism Communicators Training Workshop organised jointly by the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) and Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC) in Singapore on 8-9 June 1992. Its preparation was facilitated by a grant provided by the PATA Foundation to the PATA Asia Division in Singapore. Mr Imtiaz Muqbil, Deputy Editor - PATA Travel News; Chief Correspondent - Travel Trade Gazette Asia; and Columnist - World Travel Monitor, Bangkok Post was engaged by PATA Asia Division to compile this manual.

The objectives of the manual is to provide tourism communicators primarily in the travel writing and public relations related functions

1. a broader understanding of the industry, concepts and issues of communication and its best practice and

2. provide an additional tool to utilise in further training of personnel in communications related functions.

To achieve these objectives, the manual is developed as a working document and attempts to address issues rather than be instructional. The emphasis is on print journalism, but issues and outlined principles are valid for all other areas of communications as well.
The main design facilitates constant updating and users should expect to receive updates of the manual from PATA Asia Division from time to time.

A series of workshops in PATA member countries in Asia to be held during the next two years, form an integral part of PATA Asia Division’s programme of work towards enhancing the level of training facilities available for travel and tourism communicators in Asia. These workshops will be organised with the assistance of the PATA Chapter network and this manual will be used as the primary tool in the training programme.

Our thanks go out to the PATA Foundation, Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre, Mr Imtiaz Muqbil, the speakers and participants at the PATA/AMIC Asian Communicators Training Workshop and the PATA Department of Communications for support and assistance rendered for this project.

We wish users of this manual a most productive experience and request you to get in touch with us for any further assistance.

Renton de Alwis
Director-in-Charge
30 July 1992
PREAMBLE

On the morning of Sunday, 19 April 1992, I flicked on my bedroom TV to catch the morning news. An NBC news item was underway, comparing the competitive positions of European and US airlines in the trans-Atlantic air-fare war. One flight attendant said on camera that her airline takes such good care of its employees that they begin to think of the company like parents. Another said that care motivates the employees to return the respect the company gives them. The news clip concluded with the observation: "Success depends not on the planes but on motivating the people that fly them."

I am a reporter by profession. In this manual, I am going to take you into the reporters’ mind, explain to you how we work and help you better understand some of our problems. I am also going to help you better understand how we see you and your work. That is the goal set to me. In assigning this manual, PATA stressed a focus on "the need for mutual understanding" between media and those in charge of communication functions in travel & tourism and noted that "it is only through a sound understanding of each other’s objectives and needs that the travel & tourism industry communicators will be able to optimally contribute to the future growth of the industry (my underlining).

This manual is not meant to produce finite boxes into which the relationships between the media and the rest of the world can be packaged. Every aspect of such relationships is subject to the vagaries and idiosyncrasies of human nature. All it purports to do is to provide guidelines, checklists, tips and directions about how these relationships can be better managed to the mutual advantage of both.
For purposes of clarity, this manual is divided into three parts, the first giving a general overview of the tourism industry, the second discussing the way travel communicators can better understand and deal with the media and the third discussing the way the media sees itself, the way it works and the problems it has with communicators.

The entire manual is based on my personal experiences and recollections. All comments and suggestions are personal remarks, in no way reflective the policy of my employing company Asian Business Press, publishers of PATA Travel News Asia-Pacific and Travel Trade Gazette Asia, nor its editors.

A famous British statesman who was getting grilled daily in the Press was once asked if it bothered him: "Why should it?" he replied, "A newspaper is nothing but a mass of processed pulp which I browse through every morning and use to wrap fish in the evening."

A newshound approached a farmer sitting atop a huge machine in a cornfield and said, "Pardon me, sir, I'm a reporter..." And the guy on the machine replied, "Great. So we're in the same business then, huh?" The puzzled reporter said, "We are...?" And the guy on the machine tossed off, "This here machine is a manure spreader."

A journalist came late for an editorial meeting. "Why're you late?" barked the editor. "And what's that gunk under your shoe?" The embarrassed reporter looked at his sole and replied. "Gee, sorry, boss. But I was walking through your office a minute ago; I guess I must've stepped into one of your editorials."
There is a tendency to believe that the communications is an objective, definable science that can fit into boxed parameters. Nothing could be further from the truth. The media is a highly subjective governance that depends considerably, and perhaps entirely, on the personal experiences, powers, mandate, responsibilities and ethics of journalists, editors and publishers. It is shaped by many factors, especially the competition that particular media, be it a radio station or a monthly magazine, is up against.

Look at the front pages of any two competing publications and you will see the subjectivity of media decision-making. Unless there is a national event like an election result or a killing spree or an earthquake, the chances are that what may be front-page news in one publication will be a page three or four lead in the other.

A newspaper has to be:

- informative
- analytical
- up-to-date
- entertaining
- controversial
- responsible
- truthful

Most important: It has to be worth reading; consistently worth reading, day in and day out.
A newspaper is no different from any product, just like a pack of chewing gum: A reporter and photographer supply the raw material, the sub-editors and editors package it, the printers "manufacture" it and the publishers and marketing people sell it. Ditto for chewing gum. And the newspaper is just as capable of going bankrupt as the gum company.

When you buy a product, you expect that it is consistently good. Once it turns out to be stale and you are likely to think twice about buying it again. A newspaper faces this dilemma day in and day out. Unfortunately, there are no scientific parameters by which a newspaper can guarantee consistent quality every possible day. We have what we call in the media "good" and "bad" news days which paradoxically mean quite the opposite of what they suggest: A "good" news day is really one on which there is plenty of bad news and vice versa. People remained glued to CNN when the Iran-Iraq war was on or when the Soviet Union was breaking up or when the Berlin Wall was coming down. But then things sort of faded. Headline-grabbing news was out.

The media operates in some difficult circumstances. The rate of staff turnover is high. The work is hard and the pressures are tremendous, in terms of accuracy, deadlines and competitiveness. One Newsweek survey classified journalists as one of the 10 most stressful jobs, in the same league as policemen and airline pilots, among others. Mind you, another group classified us in the same league as lawyers and used-car salesmen but that’s another story.

The Press does not generate news of its own accord. If you people do not keep us informed, we are dead. If the media is not an exact science, nor is the art
of communications. Everybody from the National Enquirer to the New York Times, Playboy to Cosmopolitan, is part of the media. It defies stereotype descriptions and there is no single objective way of dealing with it. Everyone has different needs, opinions, personalities and modus operandis. But between those differences, there are also many similarities. This manual is intended to help everyone better understand those similarities. Because no matter how deep the differences, it is the similarities that will bring us together. And there is no doubt that we both need each other.