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[Q&A with the Valley's Mr PR, Vijay S. Chattha](#)

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Vijay Chattha is the man. When you're talking public relations and strategic marketing in Silicon Valley, the amount of people who actually make things happen can be measured on the fingers of one hand.

And in this context, *the* chap to know is Vijay of [VSC PR Consulting](#). Very well known across the San Francisco area and beyond, I've mentioned him a few times on the site and I've recommended oodles of people talk to him. He's got his finger on the pulse and his team are some of the best influencers and marketers I've met.

Dropping into the VSC offices in San Francisco is a real treat because it's there that you can — sometimes, if you're lucky — get a visual on the secret sauce. To watch Vijay and the other VSC Consulting chaps work the crowd at an event is fascinating. Indeed, do you remember my shocking [faux pas](#) with Omar Hamoui of [AdMob](#)? I sat down next to him at a dinner and asked him 'what he did'. He's only the founder of AdMob. Nice one Ewan. That dinner, by the way, was arranged by Vijay.

So if you've got a smart product offering in the mobile industry (or related fields) and you'd like to get the word out? Strongly consider talking to Vijay. If you'd like an intro, talk to me.

I grabbed Vijay a while ago and asked him to do a quick Q&A for MIR. I'm pleased to report that he has done so. Here we go. The questions are in bold.

If you're got an interest in mobile and marketing/public relations, I reckon you'll find some of Vijay's answers challenging, fascinating or relevant.

Where do opportunities lie in mobile content for 2009?

It depends which market you're talking about. While some markets are saturated with mobile content, others are still wide open. There's now a ton of mobile content, but poor discovery of it. Hey there's a business for someone out there!

2009 will see a lot more growth in mobile from countries outside of the United States. On a recent trip to India, I witnessed a lack of anything off-deck. I believe the same holds true for other countries. Also, let's not abandon the premium models in some countries where advertising won't fully support the concept. Some countries don't have a major advertising base.

And where are all the regional and country-specific iPhone apps?

This should be the next market for developers. I predict 2009 will see a slew of new services for Smartphones that focus on foreign markets. Already, it's clear that some apps have global market appeal such as the popular iFart application, which was made quite an impression with my cohorts stateside and in Bangalore. I'd hardly call it a sticky app, but certainly borderless in its appeal.

Country-specific services similar to Facebook or Twitter are also experiencing massive growth right now. I don't want to mention their names, but you'll be hearing about some of them in MIR soon.

So as mobile content evolves, how should PR evolve along with it?

First of all, startups and blue chips need to re-examine the value of wire services. In our analysis of over 100 wires released in 2008, we didn't see much additional publicity generated from those wires than from direct correspondence with media. \$600 for every announcement starts to add up. I predict lesser-known services like WebWire will take off in 2009, giving companies some official platform for their news and to increase SEO, but at the much more economically efficient price of \$19.95. Big companies still see the 'wire' as a place for some sort of official statement to make, but the value beyond a receipt of your news is

depreciating.

Secondly, PR is going to continue to play a bigger role in the medium term for mobile consumer and B2B marketing as traditional advertising budgets start to shrink. This has been happening in a major way since 2001 and we are seeing more of the same now. For b2b, as companies ready themselves for major events like CTIA or Mobile World Congress, awareness will be key. On the consumer side, the iPhone has made mobile content a d2c marketing opportunity, without the need of much carrier marketing or approvals. PR is driving many of the top apps and is crucial to their success.

How do you see the mobile news media evolving?

Mobile media outlets have a golden opportunity. While mainstream media like The New York Times and blogs like TechCrunch broaden their mobile coverage, mobile trades can continue to tackle deeper issues in mobile, beyond news. A lot of journalists in the U.S. are already taking advantage of this opportunity, such as Colin Gibbs at RCR Wireless, Tricia Duryee at Moconews and Sue Marek at Fierce Wireless.

It's time to deflate hype, talk about real revenues, challenges and opportunities in mobile. The mobile trades have the golden opportunity to press harder in 2009.

As it relates to companies and their PR objectives, it's time to rethink what we consider news. Firms need to think about data and trends. We all want to know what's really happening within mobile, who is growing, shrinking and stagnating. We're going to see more results-based news emerge in 2009 as a way to demonstrate the transparency that the mobile industry requires.

What about trade shows? What do you expect to see at CTIA?

One word – lobbycons (U.S.) and café'cons in Europe. It's all about being around the show and not necessarily in the show. I can't remember the last time I voluntarily listened to a panel at a mobile technology tradeshow, even if some celebrity was guaranteed to show up. We should have known a bubble was coming when P. Diddy and Quincy Jones were keynoting events!

Companies are going to revert to private events around shows, allowing them to pass on the thousands of dollars/euros that are required to enter or exhibit. Hotel suites and lobbies, nearby bars and even nightclub VIP rooms will be where deals are made at a more cost-effective rate.

How has the iPhone changed marketing and PR?

As I mentioned above, direct-to-consumer publicity is now an effective possibility, thanks to the iPhone and the App Store. Previously, mobile content firms had their hands tied waiting for carrier approvals on certain distribution deals. Not anymore.

As long as Apple or Google approves your app, companies can create direct-to-consumer messages and marketing plans.

Apple's TV ads have also helped greatly. For example, Urbanspoon's mention in the iPhone commercial was worth millions of dollars. Now more people can see what is possible on their device thanks to Apple's TV commercials.

Lastly, iPhone ad units themselves have also emerged as an effective marketing medium. The idea of target marketing will continue to be the best spend of any marketing dollars on- or offline.

What value will PR provide in a downturn?

Strategic advice. Companies want to know where best to spend their money. Some of the best things PR folks can tell their clients is exactly what shows and programs are NOT worth attending. Pushing back, debating and setting realistic expectations are the keys to PR's value in a downturn, beyond the basic messaging and awareness goals.

We're even getting into product development, where we are surveying the market and recommending features and products that can generate buzz and value to consumers.

How can companies that read MIR most effectively leverage marketing and PR in 2009?

Focus on making a killer product first. Advertising and marketing will get someone to you once, but a good product keeps them coming back.

Also, think outside entertainment. Think about new verticals like healthcare and other untouched areas, like location, that leverage mobile-specific features.

Once you have your product nailed, do some market research. Hire a firm that will test your product on a target audience. Don't just send it to friends and family who will be biased; assemble a target audience and see how they use it. Make sure you really have something of value, because not enough companies do this.

Once that's happened, get aggressive. Work with your marketing resource; define your audience and attack. Everything from PR to social media (Twittering, blogging) and partnerships should be considered.

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Vijay, thank you very much for taking the time and I'll see you at CTIA! Vijay's site is at

vseconsulting.com.

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