

Vision and Strategy

An Interview with Claudia Levo,
Corporate Vice President-External Communications, STMicroelectronics

EDITORS' NOTE Claudia Levo has held her current post since January 2011. In January 2012, she took on additional responsibility as Senior Vice President, Global Communications at ST-Ericsson. In 1993, Levo began her career with Marconi, a global telecommunications company, where she had responsibility for a number of management roles within the Communication function. In 2005, she managed the communication activities related to the integration of Marconi with Ericsson and was subsequently appointed Vice President for Communications at the newly formed Ericsson Multimedia Business Unit. In 2008, Levo was appointed Vice President Communications at Italtel. In early 2009, she joined ST-Ericsson, the newly established wireless joint venture between STMicroelectronics and Ericsson. Levo was born in Genoa, Italy and holds a language school diploma in English and Russian.



Claudia Levo

COMPANY BRIEF STMicroelectronics (www.st.com) is a global leader serving customers across the spectrum of electronics applications with innovative semiconductor solutions. ST aims to be the undisputed leader in multimedia convergence and power applications leveraging its vast array of technologies, design expertise, and combination of intellectual property portfolio, strategic partnerships, and manufacturing strength. The company's net revenues were \$9.73 billion in 2011.

You have been involved in corporate communications for the past 20 years. How have you seen it change?

The biggest change is the pace at which we now communicate and the fact that the time to react to a potential crisis or to beat competition on good ideas is greatly reduced. Additionally, we have more channels through which to communicate, due in large part to the Internet and social media. The creation of a true global economy as well as the rise of multinational corporations means you must be able to manage your messages and communication strategies consistently throughout the world. All of these new challenges have increased the scope of a communications department – I personally manage a team across 15 different countries – and have created a different set of rules, the need for a clear and lean process, and the birth of the networked organization.

However, one important thing has not changed: the importance of our role to effectively identify, craft, and communicate a company's messages and to protect, nurture, and spread company culture.

Communications executives have growing prominence in corporate culture and influence over CEOs. How has this changed your role?

The role of a communications executive has become more strategic as it has increased in prominence. It is not just sitting "close to the CEO" and communicating his vision; it is "sitting" in the

business and working "with" the business, looking at the industry and market trends to provide strategic counseling. I have been lucky enough to be part of corporations that place communications as a key member of their strategic decision-making processes. If you are privileged to be part of this process and to anticipate the trends, your job will be more proactive and effective.

What are the main factors that have changed how corporations communicate with their audiences?

The biggest factor is the emergence of globalization and the need for global messages, a global approach, and networked organizations; second is the digital age and the new communications channels brought on by technology, the Internet, and social media; and third is new societal challenges brought about by the exploding population, the aging of the population, and the reduction of our natural resources that require a corporation to be more responsible. This is an area where STMicroelectronics is a pioneer and remains at the forefront.

What makes for the most effective corporate communications?

Companies that are most effective have a strong culture and a set of values and vision that are easy to express both inside and outside the company. They also have a communications strategy fully aligned with the company strategy as well as the ability to anticipate trends in a globalized and multinational environment. Companies that succeed in communicating are those where each employee is a communicator, deeply embraces the company's culture, and naturally becomes an ambassador. This is particularly true in the current environment, where everyone has the tools to communicate.

In today's global economy, how do you communicate in countries with different cultures while keeping the company message consistent?

It is through a mix of processes and an organizational approach as well as an effective communications road map where high level messages are deployed at a country level to ensure localization but alignment with a company's direction. A communications campaign can be customized for each country but a global theme will remain a constant. You have to be organized by projects and involve team members from different cultures and disciplines. This is where you can demonstrate the distinctive value of communications: deploying an effective and integrated communications program that pulls together various channels in a consistent way and leverages social media.

Do women tend to take on more prominent roles in the communications industry?

What we are seeing today is the emergence of women in leadership positions in all industries and that is reflected in PR. Women are influential in the PR industry and have been for some time, and what we see today is that other industries are now experiencing a similar trend. In PR, we must anticipate trends and be at the forefront and the ability to do so is indicative of those who are a part of our industry.

What are the key competitive advantages for STMicroelectronics and how do you communicate these advantages to your audiences?

ST is a global player with leading positions in many areas and countries. Our key advantages are a focused vision and strategy, based on two pillars: sensing and power technologies and multimedia convergence applications. We also have one of the broadest and most innovative electronics portfolios and technologies within the industry backed by 25 years of leveraging technology and a passionate employee base of 50,000 people worldwide. From energy management and savings to trust and data security, we are found everywhere microelectronics makes a positive and innovative contribution to people's lives. This is part of our DNA and our brand reflects our deep-rooted company culture and vision – life.augmented.

What are the most significant issues communications executives will face in 10 years?

It's tough to predict. The world is running so fast, technology adoption even faster. The challenge for us is to remain one step ahead – avoiding the risk of being only reactive – and to preserve and nurture company culture. Our role as communicators is to maintain, feed, and communicate the culture of our company – it is not just our job, but an opportunity to preserve its future. ●