

CBC quest for global coverage

By Alec Mattinson

The Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) has outsourced its PR function to Saffron Chase as its corporate backers increasingly focus on emerging market opportunities.

The CBC acts as a bridge between private companies and Commonwealth nations, with a particular focus on developing economies. It is primarily funded by the corporate world and boasts the likes of steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal and Rio Tinto chairman Paul Skinner on its board.

Many firms are pushing for the CBC to get more international press coverage to boost the profile of its private sector initiatives. Public affairs and financial comms specialist Saffron Chase has been briefed to increase the CBC's sketchy presence in key Western media outlets - concentrating on the business pages of UK and US titles and financial broadcasters.

The quest to boost coverage reflects the growing importance being placed by Western businesses on emerging market opportunities.

Vitkas Pota, MD of Saffron Chase, said: 'In today's world

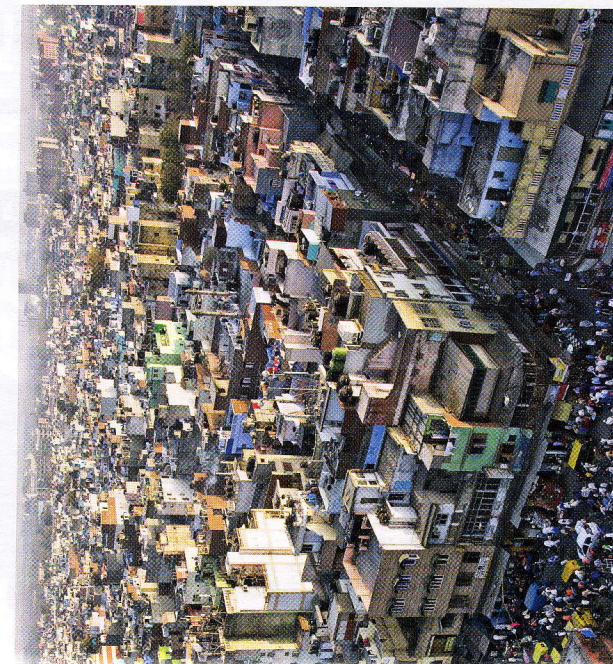
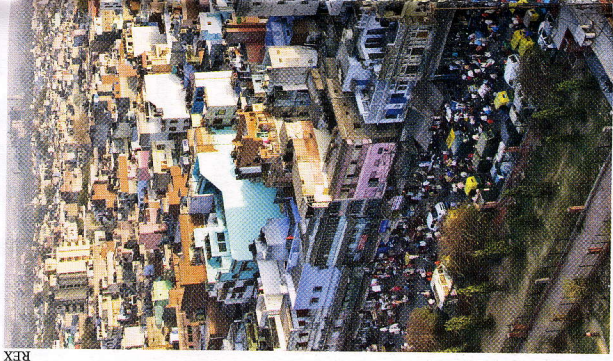
of the credit crunch and turmoil in global markets, all companies are looking at where the next wave of revenues will come from. Increasingly that will be from emerging countries.'

He added that the CBC enjoyed the support of a large majority of FTSE companies and numerous firms from within emerging countries.

The newfound stability in many African countries has encouraged corporates to enter the region, but the primary Commonwealth growth story remains the Indian market.

A raft of UK corporates are growing their businesses in India (the UK banking, energy and insurance industries already have a strong presence) and are seeking local communications expertise. While there is an independent PR industry in India, large global comms firms have been entering the market in huge numbers in recent years.

Lewis India general manager Arunava Kahn said: 'India's PR industry is growing every year. International brands are expanding into the country and needing comms support in the Indian market, and a lot of Indian companies



Emerging market Global comms

are expanding their horizons.'

Brands such as ICICI Bank and Tata, which recently bought Jaguar Land Rover, are turning to agencies for global PR support, and agencies are increasingly seeking a local base in the Indian market.

Firms such as Edelman, M&L and Ogilvy have moved into India through link-ups and acquisitions of local agencies, while global specialists such as APCO and Lewis have opened offices there.

How I see it



David Westover
director, emerging markets, CitiGate
Dewe Rogerson

Emerging markets are much more integrated into the global economy than they used to be. Last year and the first half of 2008 saw a lot of IPOs from emerging markets and we continue to see interest in corporate profile

firms have been entering the Indian PR industry in huge numbers

building and financial comms from these countries, even if IPO volumes have declined.

Investors have become more familiar with emerging market companies, which have in turn become more familiar with investors' expectations in terms of comms. There is still a need for investors to become more educated about these markets, and that's very much part of our role.

FD snaps up Perth branch

FD has boosted its Australian operations with the acquisition of Porter Novelli's Perth business for an undisclosed sum.

The business will now operate under the FD Third Person brand, working alongside FD's existing Sydney and Melbourne offices.

The Perth consultancy is owned and managed by directors Paul Downie and John McGlue.

'The change to FD will provide our clients with access to the best of what the group does nationally and internationally, plus the benefit of exceptional on-the-ground services in major business and investor centres around the world,' said McGlue. 'FD is by far the best fit for our clients and our business.'

Downie established the Perth office of Porter Novelli in 1993, having previously managed an agency specialising in the mining and finance industries.

McGlue acquired a 50 per cent interest in Porter Novelli Perth in 2002.

FD has now opened five new offices in 2008, taking its global presence up to 27 cities worldwide.