CORPORATE REPUTATION IN THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY:

A SOUTH AFRICAN CASE STUDY

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MCOM IN COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

in the

FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

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October 2003

Declaration

I declare that the Master's dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree MCom Communication Management at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at another university.

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Johanna Regine Josèphe le Roux

October 2003

Acknowledgements

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to the following people for their contribution to this research dissertation:

My supervisor, Professor A.F. Grobler and co-supervisor, Professor G. Puth, for their assistance, guidance and encouragement throughout the study.

Thank you to my mother, Annette le Roux, for her support and her faith in my abilities and to all my friends for their continuous support and encouragement.

To Access Market International for their support and for giving me the opportunity to conduct this study.

I would also like to thank Mrs Bradley for her time and patience in proofreading the text.

Abstract

This study focuses on measuring the corporate reputation of an organisation within the information technology (IT) industry in South Africa. An empirical investigation was conducted to identify the elements that influence corporate reputation. The research design selected was a case study. For purposes of confidentiality, the organisation used in this dissertation will be referred to as The Group.

There were three specific objectives to this study; firstly to identify the channels of communication between the organisation's stakeholders; secondly to identify the specific elements that influence corporate reputation for each stakeholder group, and finally to provide The Group with recommendations to develop an investor-orientated image and reputation within the South African business environment.

This research study consisted of four phases: initial qualitative exploratory research, problem finalisation and re-conceptualisation, quantitative data collection and finally analysis reporting. Stakeholders included in this study were The Group's employees, The Group's executive board, clients, non-clients, financial analysts, trade and business media, partners and suppliers, public relations houses and the general public.

The main conclusions drawn from the study are that the channels of communication internally and externally to the organisation influence corporate reputation. The most important disseminators of information regarding The Group are its employees. Corporate communications, clients and the media also play a vital role in influencing corporate reputation. These stakeholders should be targeted to receive the bulk of the reputation improvement activities so that a change in their perceptions can be filtered through to the stakeholders. Four specific business processes have been identified that have an impact on corporate reputation, namely general business management, financial management, corporate marketing and corporate communications.

Abstract

Recommendations emanating from this study to improve corporate reputation within the IT industry suggest that The Group create a stronger public awareness. Communication initiatives need to assure stakeholders that The Group is performing well although the share price is low. An extensive black economic empowerment (BEE) programme will enhance the corporate reputation. Finally, The Group needs to agree on a set of actionable initiatives across corporate functions, marketplaces and service lines to enhance the corporate reputation.

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