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Unreviewed Mixed Matters Article:

How to Communicate an Event to the Media

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In 2018 a very important event took place in Russia that had worldwide impact: the Football World Cup. I'm French and we won! But aside from patriotism, the craze for this extremely popular sport can be largely attributed to the media. Without them, such an event could not have achieved such a magnitude of success. The World Cup has been explored by the media from all angles: fashion, science, history, geography, philosophy, people, women, and so on. This information was broadcast and streamed 24 hours a day.



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Why was this? As Manchester United striker Eric Cantona said in the 1990s: "When seagulls follow the trawler, it's because they think he's going to throw sardines". The media mobilized for economic reasons. Such events allow them to sell more. More newspapers, more magazines, more advertising and so on. To create as large an audience as possible, the media have to find topics that will interest and engage the emotions of the

maximum number of people from all backgrounds. Was the audience's emotion created from nothing? Was it concocted in a hidden laboratory at the bottom of an obscure journalism laboratory, or by computer algorithm? Of course not; the media are just manipulators of emotions surrounding an event. The word media is the plural of the Latin word medium which means middle or mean. "The media" refers to any institution or impersonal means of wide and collective dissemination of information or opinions, whatever its medium. An event itself creates emotions, which the media disseminate, but who transmits these emotions from the event to the media?

There are three characteristics that constitute the strengths and attractions of an event:

1. The fact that it is ephemeral, unique and unusual

It represents a break from everyday life.

2. Polysensory experience

Philippe Mériau (pedagogue), wrote: "If I consume knowledge, I retain 20%, if I make knowledge, I retain 90%." To manufacture knowledge means to live it in the flesh. It is clear that the more of our senses involved, the more we identify with a situation and this multi-sensory aspect is one of the key factors in the attractiveness of an event.

3. The crowd effect

Obviously, the vast majority of events are intended to bring together a large number of participants. Moreover, it is often through overall attendance that an event is recognized and considered successful.

Events take advantage of these factors and use the collective unconsciousness to put their various messages across. The rarity factor and the polysensoriality of an event depends on its organization. The crowd effect creates the emotion and benefits that come with it. This will create an interest in the media to broadcast your message.

So, how do you communicate your event to the media? This can be articulated in 3 steps:

First:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are we talking about when we talk about media relations?• Why are they so important?
Second:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your objective and the message you want to convey• The knowledge of your audience, which is also called the "final target" or the consumer in marketing terms.

Third:

- The 1st phase: before the event;
- The 2nd phase: during the event;
- The 3rd phase: after the event.

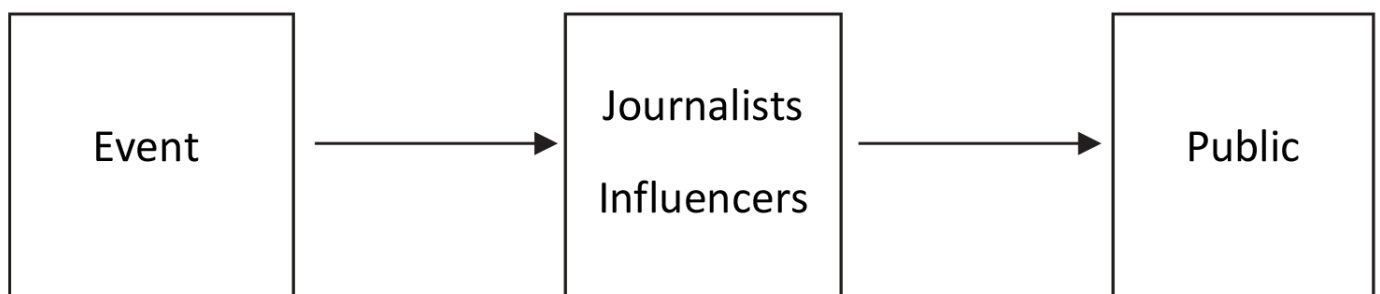
I will use my experiences as a professional communicator and teacher to give you some hints that will help to publicise an event. It should be emphasised that it is not easy to bring the media to an event, especially if it is new.

First Point

What are media relations? Why are the media so important to your event?

When I talk about the media, I mean the press, TV, radio, influencers and opinion leaders. These influencers or opinion leaders can be, in the case of historical reconstructions, historians, scientists, or celebrities that the theme of your event will interest. It is necessary to approach these influencers; not only because they have a role in passing on information and emotions, but especially because of the influence they have through their social networks which will help you reach your audience.

We can illustrate this communication process as follows:



Thus, we can define relations with the media as a set of communication actions targeted at an audience of journalists and influencers, with the aim of creating and maintaining lasting relationships, which will generate positive quotes in the media. The relationship with journalists and influencers is essential for any communication, especially since they do not just inform, but are the origin of a large part of public opinion! As you can imagine, journalists and influencers are very much in demand, it is therefore important that the event is of real interest for them.

The media is important for four reasons:

- The credibility of the message: A message picked up by a journalist or influencer is recognized as being legitimate, interesting and credible, making its impact stronger.
- The audience: you will achieve a real gain in visibility as their audience is wider.
- Free access to this form of communication saves expenses for the event.

- You will save time, especially with either influencers who broadcast their content live or those who do so shortly after. The effects, and therefore the benefits, will be immediate.

It should be noted that influencers attracted this way are independent and free to say what they think, even if they dislike an event. It is important therefore to establish a good relationship with them, and to be transparent and sincere. This will not prevent a bad review, but a good relationship will allow discussion or delay before they produce either negative coverage or none at all. In addition, when I say be sincere and transparent, it does not mean telling them everything or relaxing. You must think about every word you tell them! The identification phase of a "good influencer" is essential and requires a good knowledge of the sector in which you want to make the event known. This allows you to get feedback on an event and establish professional relationships and trust in the long term. When identifying which influencers to contact, it is very important to know your audience and set the goal or message you wish to convey. Indeed, the principle of using an intermediate target, be it an opinion leader or a journalist, is to secure a direct communication route between the sender of the message and the receiver who is the final target. This comes with both benefits and dangers, especially if the action is either poorly controlled or poorly prepared.

Second Point

What is your objective? What are your "final" targets?

The main goal is essentially about bringing in visitors, but you can also have a secondary or tertiary goals, but no more than that as this can dilute the message too much. These goals can be, for example, developing the reputation of a city by making its history known, or commemorate a particular historical period. In Villeneuve-Loubet in the south of France, where I live, we organise every year a historical reconstruction of the arrival of King François I in our commune in 1538. The municipality organises parties with a reconstruction of the arrival of the King and his court, some scenes of the time, dances, games, or anything that can be part of the pageant. The event has been a great success due to it taking place in summer, which helps to attract tourists and children to the spectacle. For the rest of the year this village is an exemplar of calm, and the villagers much appreciate this tranquillity. However, this does not prevent us from participating, throughout the year, in the preparation of costumes, dances and shows created by volunteers from our municipality. When the time for the festival arrives, the media has relayed information on the upcoming event in the press, TV, radio and so on. As a result, a large crowd arrives for the festival, the long days and evenings of work is forgotten, and everyone is happy. The objectives have been achieved! Without the media this would not have happened.

It is important to not lose sight of your targets. The term target is borrowed from corporate strategy and marketing and refers to the "priority public" or the desired audience your event is addressed to so that your objectives are achieved. You must therefore identify your targets:

who are they? What is their relationship to the event, to the organization, or to the theme of the event or the programme? For reasons of efficiency it is desirable to concentrate your efforts on the most directly concerned audience and define two to three levels of priority, a list of targets is not enough. It is also important to analyse them. Who are they precisely (nature, number, activities, age, sex, nationality)? What are the ways to reach them and who are the influencers they listen to most? Which newspapers do they read? What other events do they attend? What is their attitude towards the event? To the organization? To the date set for the event? And your goals?

Once your targets are identified, you can think about the type of media to contact and so build what is called a "press file". This is a list of all influencers of interest for the event, with their precise contact details as well as additional information needed to optimize contact and relationships. For example, is a journalist passionate about such a period, do they have children and if so what age, what country are they from, and so on. This information is additional to essentials such as email address, phone number for reminders, what media they work for.

Third Point

The three essential phases to publicise an event

Phase one: before the event

Objective: Firstly, arousing the interest of influencers in the event, which can accompany your fund-raising activities. This is also in this phase that you register the event in the agenda of various media. This is an important phase that determines the success of phases two and three. This stage will last from three to six months, during which the challenge is to communicate with the influencers without boring them. Communication opportunities are numerous:

- Sending a 'Save the Date' for their calendars.
- Writing a "free forum", an article about the theme of your event, possibly related to current news. Highly appreciated by the media, this can be negotiated exclusively with key media.
- Organising a press event: This is any event organised specifically for the press be it a conference, breakfast, trip or anything else.

Influencers can be approached together or separately. It really depends on the evolution of the perception of the influencers, but also on their individual qualities. The more Influencers are contacted, the more necessary it will be to make these contacts attractive. They must offer a real interest for the influencers to keep them engaged. Thus, the first thing to do when

you want to organize a press event is to define the objectives, so that you can evaluate its success afterwards.

We can cite four indicators:

- Quality of the Influencers;
- the ability of the event to deliver the right message;
- the coherence of the image released by the event in relation to the initial objective;
- good press relay in terms of quality and quantity, and also a means to relay the information even if influencers do not come.

During a press event you will present a programme with a preview of what will happen, such as a stage show or costumed characters. This is about seducing them, giving them enough information to interest them but not too much, so that they will want to know more. The press event should be followed by a press release containing highlights of the event. A press release is generally a short text with unique, accurate and up-to-date information. Its goal is to attract attention and encourage influencers to publish a direct quote about the event in the targeted media. You can also, and I advise you do so, make a press kit. A press kit is more elaborate than a press statement, and includes more detailed information about the programme. It is also during this phase, as far upstream as possible, that press partnerships must be set up to guarantee a base of communication for the event.

Phase two: during the event

To generate maximum visibility for the event, influencers should be given a privileged welcome and someone should be at their disposal nonstop in order to make their work as easy as possible: accompany them, provide them with the material they will need to work (press kit: press release, dossier, photographs, videos), offer them a list of speakers available for interviews. Importantly, ensure that the messages you want to convey are well presented and understood! The ideal is to have a person in the organization dedicated to this!

Phase three: after the event

Once the main event is completed it is necessary to maintain a relationship with the influencers who attended, but also with those who did not attend. To do this, write a press release including, for example, attendance figures. Make sure the Influencers who did attend have all the elements needed to relay your message. Be at the disposal of absentees by giving them information and documents, and possibly offer them interviews, reports or meetings. Finally, carry out a press review which will be a collection of articles, posts, interviews and broadcasts; this should be used to verify the success of the event. In doing so, remember to distinguish between quantity (number of articles, interviews, reports for example and their size) and quality. Is the article neutral or not? Does it support the key message that we wanted to convey?

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to quote the French philosopher Emmanuel Mounier;

"Communication is rarer than happiness, more fragile than beauty."

Scarcity and fragility, two notions that must constantly be remembered. Nothing is simply acquired. Every word, every action, every image must be thoroughly reflected on, as must be the objectives set, the targets analysed, and the media selected. This is in order to master your media communication and its three phases with the same interest and attention that you have put into organising your event. Do not forget that the difference between information and communication is emotion. It is important to transmit this emotion to the media so they are seduced by your event and will speak about it with as much passion as you.

To illustrate my point I will use the example of one of my clients, the Compagnie 73-Théâtre de Cannes. They are a theatre troupe in Cannes that plays very contemporary pieces (which are more difficult to attract the public to than classic pieces). Its president, Guy Foissy, is a French playwright and author who has won many awards and whose work is played around the world. Compagnie 73-Théâtre de Cannes poured all its efforts into their acts, costumes and sets. However, their communication with the media consisted of two adverts per year. This was accompanied by a few dozen A4 posters and programmes for the season. Was the theatre sold out? No! The reason being because they did not reach their potential audience. The audience was essentially limited to elderly people, and although it was of course a pleasure to have these people present they were mainly there due to the fact that there was a club for the elderly just opposite the theatre. I was contacted by a friend of the troupe who found it sad to see so much work being presented to a rather empty room. I set up a media communication strategy which started by analysing the potential audience. Then we set objectives, identified which media to contact, wrote a press kit and press releases and organised television reports. Very quickly the room was filled, much to the delight of the actors. It was good for their finances, and in addition we had acquired a new audience, one that corresponded to the programme that the Company had put in place. That is the key to success, to perform in front of a public that is attentive; a public that is delighted and thus a public that will return and speak well of you and your show.

Do not forget that successful communication cannot be improvised, just as you are a professional in your business; your communication needs to be professional, especially as the tools of communication are constantly evolving.

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