

Marketing and communication applied to tennis organisations.

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ABSTRACT

This article intends to help coaches, club managers, schools and federations to become aware of the role of the media in the success or failure of an event in a player's career. It presents some considerations and suggestions within the framework of a communication plan that are considered essential to reach the expected targets.

Key words: Media, Sponsor, Promotion.

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INTRODUCTION

Previous considerations

The media is a platform to provide and share knowledge and information about tennis to organisations and to the public. It is a key tool to get keep the public up-to-date with news, schedules and results of current and upcoming tournaments. It is also a way to involve sponsorship promotion, encourage participation in tennis and inform the public about upcoming events.

The media may not be directly interested in the activities of certain smaller organisations for their own sake, in this case, the tennis stakeholders are the ones who have to communicate all the news and projects. There is a range of organisations that use social media and other media platforms as a way to communicate and promote themselves. The communication plan is a key organisational tool that will help to achieve a positive relationship between the public and the media.

Communication plan

In order to design a communication plan there must be clearly defined objectives, i.e. analysing the needs of the association, event or player. These objectives must be realistic and in line with the budget available. It important to appoint a person in the organisation who will be responsible for the implementation of the communication plan.

What can we communicate? Table 1 summarises the different tennis related contents that can be communicated.



Figure 1. Elements in the communication plan

Communication contents
The presentation of an event
New appointments within organisations
Communication of news of the institution and/ or event
Communication of future projects
Announcements and awards
Spread the opinion on a current issue of public interest, related with the activities of the institution or within the tennis sector
At the individual level, inform about the participation of an event and/ or the results achieved

Table 1. Communication contents

What media to communicate?

Local and regional media will be more or less replete of certain information. Information must be channelled in a way that will impact the appropriate audience in the most efficient way. Media organisations must concentrate their attention on tennis in specific and sport specialised media to ensure that the material they are producing is concise and relevant.

What tools are available?

There are a variety of communicative resources available to communicate information quickly and to target audiences. Table 2 summarises these resources.

Communication tools or resources
Databases
Press releases
The agenda of an event / the magazine of a club/ a tennis tournament schedule
A website
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram, etc.)
An e-bulletin or newsletter
A blog

Table 2. Communication tools or resources.

Below you will find a detailed list of the most common communication tools or resources.

Press releases

The aim of a press release is to facilitate information or invite the public to a concrete event. The main elements are: date, name and logo of the institution, headline, text, signature and contact details. The press release should not be longer than a page. The style should be short and to the point and as journalistic as possible.

It is advisable to include a high definition photograph and/ or an internet link. It is convenient to produce a calendar to send press releases following the highlighted steps of the communication plan. It is advisable to reinforce press releases with phone calls. As to the wording of the press release, its characteristics are the following: a short headline with the name of the sponsor, the tournament, the club and/ or the person mentioned. The first paragraph must answer the following questions: What? Who? When? Where? and How? It is also necessary to include the statements of the persons interviewed between inverted commas.

Programme of the event/ press guide

This resource includes sport, social and practical information before the event. It is normally published as a paper or electronic magazine in pdf format. The tools in the programme are usually the following: a greeting from the authorities, a technical guide, an honour roll, participating players or exhibitors, an event background, facilities and services, sponsors and advertising, contact details, and as an option, an article about the event or about tennis in general.

Website

If it is a club website, this communication tool will help to produce the most complete and up to date information. It should not be a static resource and it needs to be regularly updated, there has to be someone in charge of the site (Sotelo, 2012). Another important element is to have a corporate design to add value to the website, menus should be clear and should make navigating easy. Sponsors must have enough room so that they are clearly visible and in relation to their contribution to the institution. If it is a tournament or event website, it is necessary to include things such as a "Factsheet", the order of play, the results, the draws, the players, the venue, access to the facilities, the tournament guide, the history, the different news, photos and videos of the event.

Social media

Social media helps to manage the online reputation of the tennis organisation, club or player. Thus, we have to be dynamic and create a loyal community of virtual followers that will help to increase the number of sponsors and create a media impact. However, it is key to study and moderate the use of the social networks. Twitter and Facebook, are the most popular platforms of social networks, they have an extraordinary impact on tennis and they help to improve the optimisation of search engines and user engagement.

E- newsletter

This tool provides a permanent information service for those who, having registered earlier, are interested in your content. It is usually sent as an email in pdf or html format. The appropriate presence of the sponsors is also necessary. Likewise, it is important to guarantee the data protection according to the laws in force in each country.

Blogs

Blogs help to develop the corporate presence on the internet, since it is a web space the aim is the frequent publication of updated articles, analysis or spreading the news. These contributions can be made by one or several authors, and can include texts, images, multimedia content or links. The idea is to debate and discuss in a dialogue, creating a community of

participants to set social and professional relations in a dynamic and coherent way, as well as the promotion of collaborating or sponsoring entities.

Communication actions

Many actions can be programmed for a communication plan. Some of the most relevant are: to distribute the information of the event among those people interested in it, the organisation of presentations or press conferences about the events, to programme informal meetings with journalists (tennis tournaments for journalists, a Christmas lunch, etc.). It is fundamental to keep frequent, open communication with the journalists and provide details of upcoming events.

When to communicate?

It is, of course, key to communicate when we have something important: an event, a tournament, a clinic, the visit of a great player or celebrity, an important result of our team or club or federation player, or a tennis activist. It is our responsibility to grant the appropriate value to the information.

It is important to know that in the world of tennis, there may be times of the year which are more favourable for the media to publish information, generally, this is perhaps, because they is less distractions of other sporting events. These opportunities should be taken to promote tennis and publish more tennis news.



Measure the impact of the communication

One crucial element of all communication plans is the report of the repercussions of the communication, to know the impact of our communication policy. This report must include a list of all the communicative elements created, all the press releases sent, the material used, the activities organised, the media contacts, the media that attended our events, all the articles published by the press and in the internet, the radio and TV

appearances, the volume of the activity in social networks and the presence of the sponsors.

This way, the valuable feedback will help to change and adapt the stages and contents of communication plans to ensure that objectives are achieved in the most efficient way possible.

CONCLUSIONS

The media plays a critical role on the popularity and communication of a sport, and impacts directly on the level of the participation and involvement in a given society. This article has stressed the fact that internet has become the main source of information nowadays, which is even strengthened by mobile devices.

The 21st century is witnessing the 2.0 communication era (Olabe, 2009), and we run the risk of an information saturation. Thus, it is critical to check the truthfulness and reliability of the information before sharing to an audience. Besides, all those who are responsible for the tennis activities of any organisation must have a dynamic and active communication policy to best promote the events organised and to attract a large audience.

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