

THEY SAID WHAT???

By Scott Fraser

How Can You Be Heard Above “The Noise”?



'Tis the season...or at least it will soon be the season....for festivals, events, concerts, outdoor activities and just plain fun! As you know, late Spring, Summer and early Fall are the best times to hold events. People want to get outside and take part in whatever fun, recreational or cultural activity you have to offer.

So the good news is, we are coming in to prime festival season. But that can also present a challenge as well. How can you be heard above “the noise”? How can you distinguish your event from all those being held around you? What story will resonate with the media and the public?

Let me offer some suggestions.

First, it is always best if you can get someone *else* to tell your story, endorse you, or just generally say good things about you. For instance, one of my clients just became the title sponsor of a long running and beloved outdoor art festival. A photo was taken of the check presentation and the festival will soon be sending out a news release. In this case, my client (a bank) will have good things said about them by someone else, the festival organizers, without having to send out a news release themselves. I realize this is a bit of a reverse example. However, if my client was the festival organizer I would tell them that while the story angle is about securing the sponsorship, take the opportunity to include all the facts about the upcoming festival—where, when, how long it has been taking place, highlights of this year’s event and any other tidbit you think is important.

So, did you just secure a new sponsor, or title sponsor? Send out a release! That way you are crediting the donor, but you also can remind people of what will be coming up.

What else can you do? Well, is there a politician, local civic leader, Chamber of Commerce executive, sports or entertainment figure or someone else who might say good things about your event? Have them put out a release or be available for an interview about your organization or event. That way you will be the recipient of the good will coverage, without bragging about yourselves.

Have you just secured a big name band, singer, entertainer or speaker? Send out a release! This will generate interest and possibly increase or at least jump start ticket sales. It reminds people that your event is taking place and hopefully gets them interested in what you will have to offer. And if you have several entertainers taking part in your event, it is OK to send out individual releases for each act signed. That way you get several bites at potential coverage rather than sending out just one release with the names of all acts listed.

Another option is to partner with a non-profit group or charitable organization. No matter how good your event is or how well it is loved in the community, sharing some of your spotlight, not to mention profits, with a worthy organization is sure to make news. You will be looked at as caring and compassionate. Even if a story will profile your non-profit partner, news of why they are partnering and details of your event always make it in to the story.

And speaking of stories, the media loves to tell them. If your event has been around a long time, it sometimes is hard for the covering media to come up with a new angle. They don’t want to write/record/film the same people and subjects that have been interviewed and covered the previous year and the years before that. So, find a new angle and suggest it to those on your media list. Profile an individual. Is there something unique about a performer, or someone on your organizing committee? Have they overcome some specific hardship to get where they are today? Focus on a small piece of what you do, or one specific individual and let the media build on that. All of the pertinent details of your event will be used in the story.

Are animals involved? Even better! Who can resist the cute face of a puppy, kitten or even a Holstein? Find a way to get a photographer out to take pictures of the event set-up. Arrange to have an animal or two on the grounds (if they are part of your event that is) just to give a preview. For example, are you having a “bark in the park” type of event? Send out a media advisory saying a “spokes-Schnauzer” will be available for interviews prior to the event. Of course it is a gimmick, but it should make people smile. And you might just want to make some *people* available for interviews as well.

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Does your event have a military connection? That is always worth profiling. Are you holding an air show? Make sure you play up the military connection of aircraft that will be in the sky and maybe showcased on the ground as well. If you don't have a direct military connection, but may be offering discounts to retired or active duty military personnel, you can always send out a release, and plan to have a local serviceman or woman available to do an interview on why such a discount will be welcomed.

And of course, the media always like superlatives. If your event is the biggest, oldest, largest, tallest, longest, loudest, best attended, longest running, largest fundraiser or some other "est", make sure to make note of that in your publicity materials. The third largest county fair in the region is not necessarily newsworthy. However, the longest running music festival west of the Rockies is something to crow about.

So as you make your plans, and pray to the weather gods for cooperation, I hope that some of the thoughts listed above will give you some good ideas for gaining positive publicity for your upcoming event. Good luck!

Scott Fraser is a veteran communications professional with more than 30 years' experience. As principal of Fraser Communications Group, he provides public relations, media relations and crisis communications advice for his clients who range from small non-profits, to international corporations. He has been hired to protect the reputations of companies in crisis, and gain positive public exposure for clients ranging from an emerging high tech company to established organizations in industry and healthcare. Sought after as a public speaker, Fraser also is an adjunct professor at Salve Regina University in Newport, RI, teaching courses in Crisis Communications and Public Relations. You can reach Scott at: sfraser@frasercomm.com, (401) 647-3444 and follow him @frasercomm on Twitter.