

HCO POLICY LETTER OF 28 MAY 1971

Remimeo

PR Series 8

TOO LITTLE TOO LATE

The hallmark of bad promotion is "Too Little Too Late".

Probably the most aggravating and most suppressive error that can be made by those doing promotion or other PR actions, is to plan or announce an event too close to the date for anyone to come.

Typical report "Only 50 came to the Congress. I guess it just wasn't popular."

An exec hearing this can validly suspect "too little too late" as the real WHY. He would be 95% right with even querying further.

"When did you announce the July 1 Congress?" Usual true answer: June 25! "How many mailings were sent?" Usual true answer: 500 "because FP....." "What other promotion was done?" Usual true answer: None.

Reason for only 50 at the Congress. "Too little promotion announced too late for anyone to come."

Often this factor is hidden. Other more dramatic reasons, not the true WHYs are advanced. "There was a football match the same date." "We are in disrepute." "There is an anti-campaign." "The press....." Yap, yap, yap. All lies. It was just too little promotion too late.

"Nobody showed up for the VIP dinner." The right response to this is "When did you send the invitations?" "Well, you see, FP wouldn't give us any stamps so....." "WHEN did you send the invitations?" "The same morning as the dinner was held." "Were they engraved?" "No we sort of ran them off on mimeo."

Just why event failures are 95% traced "handled at the last moment without proper planning and without proper verified addresses and without enough push or volume" is itself a mystery.

Undermanned PR section is the most charitable reason.

PR in reality is about 80% preparation of the event and about 20% event.

If the preparation is not planned and prepared fully well in advance of the event, the events fail.

Off the cuff PR is sometimes necessary. But usually made necessary by lack of foresight and hard work.

There is a rule about this:

THE SUCCESS OF ANY EVENT IS DIRECTLY PROPORTIONAL TO THE TIMELY PREPARATION.

In other words, poor preparation made too late gives an unsuccessful event.

PR is hard work. But the hard work mostly occurs before there is any public view of it. The work in the event itself is pie.

You see these beautifully staged affairs, these flawless polished occurrences. They look so effortless. Well, they LOOK effortless because a fantastic amount of preparation went in to them ahead of time.

A well attended event is planned and drilled and announced ages ahead of the occurrence.

Even a mere dinner has to be announced at least a week in advance.

PRs who don't work hard to plan and drill and who don't announce in time with enough promotion have flops.

So PR flops come from failures to plan, drill, promote enough and in plenty of time.

Therefore PR successes are best guaranteed by data gathering, sharp planning, heavy drilling, timely announcement and adequate promotion.

Even a surprise event has to be handled this way for everyone except those for whom the surprise is intended.

So gather the data that will guide planning, plan well, program it, do all the clerical actions necessary, announce it in ample time, drill all those connected with it heavily until they're flawless and then stage it.

And there you are, a "spontaneous", highly successful event.

Whether it's a protest march, a press conference, a Congress, a new Course or dinner for VIPs or even just friends, if it's to be a success, prepare it and announce it widely in plenty of time.

There was this grave where they buried a failed PR man. And on the headstone they put, "George Backlog. Too Little, Too Late." They had to shoot him because he broke the company's leg.

A mediocre event very well prepared and announced well and in time will succeed better than the most splendid event done off the cuff.

The next time you see empty seats remember and use this P/L. Or better still do it right in the first place.

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