

AN INVESTIGATION INTO HOW PUBLIC RELATIONS IS USED BY NATIONAL GOVERNING BODIES OF SPORTS IN IRELAND. Phase One Methodology and Findings.

Abstract ID: EASM-2015-63/R1 - (567)

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Date submitted: 2015-03-18

Date accepted: 2015-04-29

Type: Professional Practice

Keywords: Public Relations, National Governing Bodies of Sport

Category: 5: Marketing in and Through Sport

Synopsis:

Sports organisations by their nature are dependent on public interest and support for their product/service, hence the development of relationships with their publics should be a key component of their organisation planning. This is and should play a major part within the public relations function especially when it comes to NGB's of sport who rely heavily on the support and interest of their publics.

The aim of this research is to explore the position, role and use of the Public Relations function used by Irish NGB's of Sport, of which there are 69 NGBs affiliated under the Irish Sports Council.

Abstract:

"Developing a relationship with their public's should be an important element of a business plan for any business which is dependent on public interest in or support of their product or services, none more so than National Governing Bodies of Sport", (Clayton-Stoldt, 2006; 2).

Sports organisations by their nature are dependent on public interest and support for their product/service, hence the development of relationships with their publics should be a key component of their organisation planning. This is and should play a major part within the public relations function especially when it comes to NGB's of sport who rely heavily on the support and interest of their publics.

The aim of this research is to explore the position, role and use of the Public Relations function used by Irish NGB's of Sport, of which there are 69 NGBs affiliated under the Irish Sports Council.

METHODS

The method applied in phase one of this study was a detailed online questionnaire on current PR practice within Irish National Governing Bodies of Sport. All 69 NGBs affiliated in to the Irish Sports Council were requested to partake in this survey. A response rate of 41% (28) was received.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the responding NGBs of sport (N=28), 63% had their own PRO in place. The public relations role seemed more common compared to having marketing sectors within the NGBs of sport in Ireland with only 35% of the sample surveyed having marketing sectors within their organisation. The NGBs with the marketing sector also had a PRO in place. However, when asked about promotion of their NGB, the responsibility tended to reside more so with the marketing and communication section (35%) than through the PROs (29%).

When asked was there a lot of PR work done within their NGB 48% agreed, 22% disagreed and 7% weren't sure. Then asked if PR can improve within their NGB, 59% strongly agreed and 37% of respondents agreed with the statement.

In relation to using open and two-way communication (communication from the organisation to their publics and from their publics back to the organisation), 70% of respondents indicated they use two-way communication in their NGB, social media being the most popular form of two-way communication. However, 19% of the respondents said they do not use this method while 11% were not sure if this communication method was used at all. This begs the question, as to why not use open and two-way communication with your NGBs publics, when NGB's of sport are so reliant on their publics. This will be probed further in phase two of this study.

Of the respondent organisations, 92% had strategic plans in place which had PR goals and objectives based in their plan with 60% of these having annual PR plans arising from this strategy. This raises the question, why does the percentage drop when asked if they had annual PR plans based within the organisations strategy. This will also be probed further in phase two.

When it came to using the four-phase approach when planning (research, action, communication, evaluation) only 31% said yes that this was the process they used. This opens the question, as to how planning is approached within NGBs, especially when it comes to PR planning.

While 63% of the respondent NGBs of sport had their own PROs, 78% used external PR agencies when it came to events, crisis and communication strategies for their NGB. This also raises the question as to the function of the PROs and will be looked at in more depth in phase two of this study.

As the percentages vary throughout the findings, it is apparent from phase one of this study that the NGBs of sport that do not have a public relations officer (PRO) in place, do not use the PR function to its full potential. However it is also clear that the NGBs that do have their own public relations officer in place still do not always practice the PR function to its full extent.

This raises the question as to the perceived role & function of public relations

within NGBs of sport and what PR planning is inherent and implemented within these organisations, do the PR professionals have work or academic experience in the field of PR, or are they there to 'just fill the role'. This will be probed further in phase two of this study.

References:

References

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