

Marketing a Science Park: Media Communication Strategies

Authors:

Sonia Palomo (Spain)

Organisation: Parque Tecnológico de Andalucía

Felipe Romera (Spain)

Organisation: Parque Tecnológico de Andalucía

MARKETING A SCIENCE PARK: MEDIA COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Executive summary

Media communication at Science and Technology Parks has been mainly a tool of strategy formulation and marketing at an international level. To do so, the main challenge is to define the “communication” messages, through which the Parks can design a process of media strategies appropriate for itself.

The PTA has designed some developments strategies adequate for the Park itself and for its companies. The Media and their attitude and understanding of Parks are critical to a Science Park success.

In order to win the communication battle, these strategies should be chosen extremely carefully and driven forward by the Park top officers. In this sense there some factors which can improve the contribution of Media’s strategies for the science parks.

Introduction

From our private lives to major world events, we affect each other and are affected by communication. Communication, as a broad term, is always on the tip of the tongue. By definition, communication is how people use messages to exchange meaning. We all know that behavior makes a difference in our lives and that communication with our families, others in our world, and with the media influences our behavior.

Due to the fact that communication occurs around us constantly, it may seem commonplace. But because communication is a building block of human experience, it is necessary to understand its complexity. Research on human communication helps us understand and improve our quality of life in many aspects of our daily life.

Communication research focuses on how people use messages to inform, persuade, manage, relate to, and influence one another in various contexts and cultures, using a variety of channels and media.

Early media researchers believed that what the public sees and hears in the media has a direct and powerful effect on public opinion. However, research has shown that this view of how the media influences opinions is too simple. As it turns out, news stories and advertisements we see frequently on TV, on the radio, and in the newspaper do not change our attitudes in a direct and obvious way. Instead, the way the media influences our opinions depends on at least three complicating factors. These include the qualities of the person delivering the message, the qualities of the message itself and the qualities and personality of the listeners.

Media communication at Parks

Media communication at Parks has been mainly a tool of strategy formulation and marketing at a regional, national an international level. To do so, the main challenge is to define the “communication” messages, through which the Parks can design a process of media strategies appropriate for themselves.

Communications is a large and nebulous area. It comprises various aspects, many of which overlap, have different interpretations and refer to different activities depending on the speaker's perspective.

The type of communication given about Science and Technology Parks use to be sundry; public communication, internal communication, corporate communication, direct marketing, advertising, branding, public affairs.... These are aimed at different audiences and use different tools and activities to convey a message.

As in any other organisational aspects, planning the communication about Parks is important and beneficial for many reasons. It ensures the most efficient use of information, priorities between conflicting news and gives a clear direction for everyday activity. Furthermore it identifies the drivers of change and the best means of dealing with them, enables a review of existing organisational activity and provides milestones against which to measure future success.

In order to win the communication battle, these strategies should be chosen extremely carefully and driven forward by the Park top officers. In this sense there some factors which can improve the contribution of Media's strategies for Parks. These factors might form the basis for establishing a number of strategic and operational priorities in helping to shape the visibility of the Science and Technology Parks.

Firstly, it must be understood and accepted by the Park top officers, that Media Communication is crucial issue. It is a way to map out the long-term evolution of the parks and the visibility and promotion of its companies.

Secondly, Media Communication should be designed, shaped and fit to the specific needs of the moment. Sometimes it is much more important to know what not to say than to know what to say.

Thirdly, there need to be a greater emphasis in Media communication work on the output or results. The good evolution of media communication is essential. It needs to be recognised and accepted that not all media communication exercises will be successful. But it must also be acknowledged and demonstrated that media communication have direct results in the evolution of the parks.

Media relations continues to be one of the most powerful tactics for Science and Technology Parks, in public relations. Sustained, planned and long-term delivery of the right message to the Parks target audience - across any medium - can help us to gain desired market, showing what Parks can contribute to the society, raise awareness and create competitive image.

Whether your communications strategy is designed for a specific project or for the same period as your organisational strategy, it should establish some important elements, as the following:

▪ Objectives

The objectives are the key to the success of Parks communication strategy. They should ensure the communications strategy. The Parks communication activities are not an end in itself but should serve and hence be aligned with the Parks organisational objectives.

Open communication between Parks and Media is vital in developing an appropriate program to create the Park image. It is also so important to have built strong relationships with key journalists and their publications and programmes. Parks have to make actions constantly for monitoring and evaluating the media's needs and the way they operate and approach their

readers and viewers and use this insight to develop successful media strategies for the Science and Technology Parks.

▪ **Audiences**

It is also necessary to identify those audiences with whom Parks need to communicate to achieve the organisational objectives. The best audiences to target in order to achieve an objective may not always be the most obvious ones, and targeting audiences such as the media may not always help achieve your objectives. Everyone would like a higher media and political profile, yet activities aiming towards this may ultimately be self-serving and only communications driven, with no wider impact. They can even have a negative effect if you dedicate resources towards this that would otherwise be put towards communicating with key stakeholders.

The first thing you have to look at always is the targeted audience, meaning by that, those persons who will read or listen the news; the more you know them, the more effective your message is going to be. The contact history is also important: Have you sent these people messages before, even ones that differ from the type of message that you are currently thinking of sending? What does the targeted audience already know or think they know about your Park or your issue? Try to create an image or a profile of the people you are trying to talk. It is always helpful to test an idea on people who are representative of the group that are being dealt with before actually going to the production phase. This may involve something as formal as inviting people to a roundtable to comment on what you are trying to do.

▪ **Messages**

After defining the audience and working environment the next step is the message itself, i.e., the concepts or visual images and key words that shall be incorporated. In the majority of cases, visual and verbal imagery working together serve as a very powerful tool.

Strategic targeting and consistency are key to Parks organisation's messages. Create a comprehensive case covering all the key messages, and emphasise the different elements of the case for different audiences.

It is important to recognize that success in this sector requires real understanding of technology as well as distribution channels, customers, decision-makers, opinion-formers and shareholders. We have to develop results orientated communication programmes that follow and support Parks strategies and objectives and reach out to make a real connection and impact with the target audience.

▪ **Tools and activities. The speaker**

Speakers' Bureaus: sending the best spokesperson out to talk at luncheons, professional and other meetings, on TV/radio, etc.; one should not wait to be asked but offer to send a speaker to a group the organization wants to influence or with whom it wants to cooperate. Speeches should be prepared in advance, informative, and tailored to the audience

The speaker is the core of the information, is the core of the message. By that he/she has to be encouraged to intern with local, regional, national and international media organizations. It is essential to be prepared for a variety of positions with media organizations. It is important for all those involved in Science and Technology Parks management, to have a clear understanding of their role and to have a good knowledge about what they have to communicate.

For that, speaker should be able to:

- Identify the tools and activities that are most appropriate to communicate.
- Selection the key messages to the audiences.
- Gather information needed to produce specialized material for media - for example, news, commercials, press releases and public service announcements.
- Demonstrate basic skills and sufficient discipline needed for basic writing and announcing
- Demonstrate overall proficiency in the use of the information
- Show skills in employee and management relations practiced with media organizations.
- Produce materials specific for media - for example a career portfolios.
- Demonstrate information literacy by remaining current on the ethical canons, laws, and governmental regulations that influence the production of mass media.
- Distinguish among the philosophical and practical standards and goals of the various forms of mass media.
- Discuss the power and the responsibilities of the mass media and evaluate the trained media professional's unique role as an individual citizen who has the potential for influencing the lives of many others in the community.
- Discuss the potential impact of mass media on the user; society's influence in shaping those media; the historical patterns of media development; the effects that the media have on other institutions; and the social and ethical questions that new technologies are raising.
- Explain the role of Parks and value of non-profit media in a local community and produce programming with those concepts in mind.
- Effective communication skills also contribute to better relationships between all the agents related to Parks.
- Being able to inform clearly and persuade effectively, provide and listen to feedback, and monitor and motivate others are highly valuable skills in the workplace.

Communicators with these skills manage the performance of others more effectively and advance through the organizational ranks with greater ease. For that, it is no surprise that communication is linked to effective leadership. We can not forget to develop results focused on Parks strategies, supporting marketing and business objectives.

The speaker has to be “assertive” when talking about Parks. Being assertive enables you to act in your own best interests, to advocate for your rights, to express your feelings comfortably and honestly and to exercise your rights without denying the rights of others. It means speaking up, as well as, being firm and consistent.

Effective listening is also an important part of communication. When you improve your listening skills; you will find you are a better communicator and better able to assert yourself and your Park effectively.

At the other way it is important to remember that if you have to teach your subordinator to give some information about the Park, do not forget that teaching communication skills without also teaching communication strategy is like telling a joke and forgetting the punch line. Effective communication is essential to the success of any information you want to give about the Park. Communication must become the business tool that provides continuity and interaction across a horizontal structure.

▪ Resources and timescales

It is essential to improve relationships. Interpersonal communication both creates and reflects the quality of our relationships with the journalist and with the audience in general. What we say and what we do not—and particularly the manner in which we speak or write—tends to shape our relationships. Communication is critical to success in these relationships. By that, Effective communication—planning, selecting, and performing communication strategies—is not solely a natural gift. When we learn to communicate effectively, our confidence about Science and Technology Parks prospective success in interactions generally increases. The ability to engage in positive and effective interactions enhances well-being, enables the spokers to form and sustain relationships, creating a correct image of the Parks.

When the popular media seek answers and information for the public, a communications strategy that uses the concept of message development and delivers timely and accurate information is very effective. All concerned know what the message is, who the audience is, and who is going to deliver the message. This harmony is achieved by having investigators, collaborators, administrators, communications personnel, and key agency officials answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the key point of the information about your Park you want to give? Your statement should reflect what you would like to see as the lead paragraph in a newspaper story or broadcast news report about this subject.
- 2) What are the facts or statistics you would like the public to remember after reading or hearing about your Park information?
- 3) Who is the main audience or population segment you would like the information to reach? Is there a secondary audience?
- 4) What is the single message your audience needs to take away from this report?
- 5) Who in your department will serve as the primary point of contact with the media and when will this person be available?

▪ Evaluation and amendment

Consider performing a communications audit to assess the effectiveness of your strategy Park with both your internal and external audiences. You should use open questions with appropriate prompts and benchmarks. Remember to consider and discuss the results carefully and use them to amend your strategy.

While drawing up your strategy, you should involve your team, and on a smaller scale, the entire organisation. You should also seek approval from both your team and organisation. Feed the communications strategy into the organisational strategy to ensure maximum alignment and efficiency. Derive a detailed month-by-month communications plan from the strategy and monitor and report your activity against the original objectives contained within the strategy.

When evaluating the reports of our communication and the way in which promote ours Parks around the world we can not forget importants aspects like international communication, internal communication and the attendance and participation in regional, national and international meetings.

▪ **Making the News and Getting Attention**

Take advantage of special dates and places that relate to your issue when planning special/media events. The more aspects of your event directly relate to your issue, the more it will appear 'worth covering' and the more it will communicate to your publics.

Making the news about your Park means to put in practice a lot of knowledge and creating controversy. The speaker should become an expert in something and promote his/her expertise among the media and has to conduct and release a reliable survey on a timely issue. It is also important to turn out the masses, developing a constituency, serve its interests and represent it well.

▪ **Developing a Strategy**

Methods for developing strategies and plans vary and usually it takes some time for the individual to find out which method works best. There are certain times when you would pay to advertise versus try to get yourself covered as a news event: for example, when it is a political message and you do not have time to organize an event or something in order to get covered as news; when you are putting out a request for services, a bid, a proposal or something like that; when you want to put at a sort of issues-oriented message that is not news, or something that is highly personal or commercial; in the case of a vacancy; or if you have a product or service that people are going to have to pay for, even an event where people are expected to buy tickets. Sometimes companies take out ads to say what they do for the community to boost their image, and for this, of course, they are expected to pay.

One powerful way that the media shapes our opinions is actually one of the most subtle. Specifically, the way the news media frames the information about Parks can have a big effect on how people think about it.

▪ **Aims of the strategy**

Those are some items in order to disseminate information about Parks:

- Communication Strategies: Things to Remember in all situations

- The main goal about Parks is always communication of information—not speech and not perfection. Use whatever method you can to get your message across—speech, writing, drawing, gesture, speech book, augmentative device.

- If you are having trouble, take a break and try again later.

- Take your time

- Try to give as much relevant information as possible

- Communication Strategies for Auditory Comprehension

- Make sure that the listener can see and if possible, hear you.

- Use concrete words, short phrases and one-step instructions when speaking.

- Speak slowly and pause frequently within your sentences. Pause before changing the topic of conversation.

- Emphasize key words related to Parks.

- Speak at a normal conversational level of loudness.

- Write down your verbal message using key words and/or phrases. Keep it short and simple. Print the message and underline key words.

- Watch for signs of understanding. The listener may indicate confusion by grimacing or inappropriate verbalizations. Rephrase or repeat the request. Writing and/or gesturing would also be appropriate.

- Repeat information as needed. Repeat information in a different way. Use different words that mean about the same thing. Write or draw.

- Remember, be patient.

- To communicate the important and relevant information of the Park, showing its influence on the society

- To engage the public and provide them with information about diversity matters related to Parks

- To show the public the strong structure of the Parks and its repercussions on the society

It is also important to note that not all of these strategies will apply to everyone related to Science and Technology Parks. You will have to choose the ones that will best meet your particular needs. Also, remember that different strategies may work better at different times, so experiment!

Conclusion

In conclusion we have wanted to demonstrate the significant influence of communication on those persons related to Science and Technology Parks and society in general. The notes and advices of communication provided here pretend to show how communication

techniques are useful to help improve Parks information in the areas of politics, relationships, communication and new technology...

We can say that drawing up a communication strategy is an art, not a science and there are lots of different ways of approaching the task.

And as Mark Twain said... "I only know what I read in the papers, and what Media says"

A GOOD EXPERIENCE:

THE CASE OF TECHNOLOGY PARK OF ANDALUCIA (PTA)

Technology Park of Andalucía generates a lot of information. This information comes from the organisations set up at the Park and also from the Park itself. In order to disseminate this information, PTA uses different ways:

WEB SITE

PTA web site is a tool to communicate and to disseminate the activities that every day happens inside and outside the Park. It is a channel to show and to approach the services offered by the Park to the enterprises, workers and any general visitors of the web.

Also the web is a necessary tool to disseminate conferences, seminars, courses... and general news that daily happen at the Park.

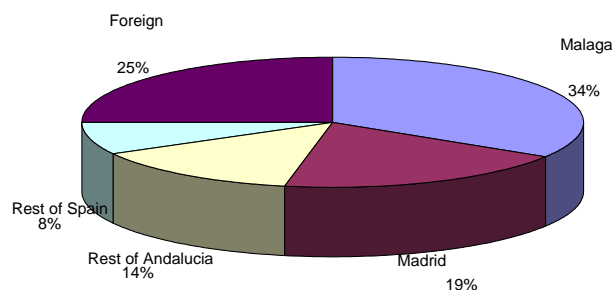
INFORMATION GENERATED BY EFE

In 1998 Technology Park of Andalucía signed an agreement with EFE (National Media Agency) which principal objective is to act as a link between the Park and the Medias. Each year about 500 notices are published at local, regional, national and international level. At the same time PTA use to appear several times at television and radio programs.

IDEA MAGAZINE

IDEA is a technology magazine that was created in order to spread the activities and opportunities of PTA and its enterprises. At this publication is possible to see reports, articles, news and general information about the organizations at the Park. The magazine has a printing of 5.500 copies and a three – monthly periodicity. The copies are sending-out around the world. The geography distribution appears at the following graphic:

IDEA Magazine's Geography Distribution



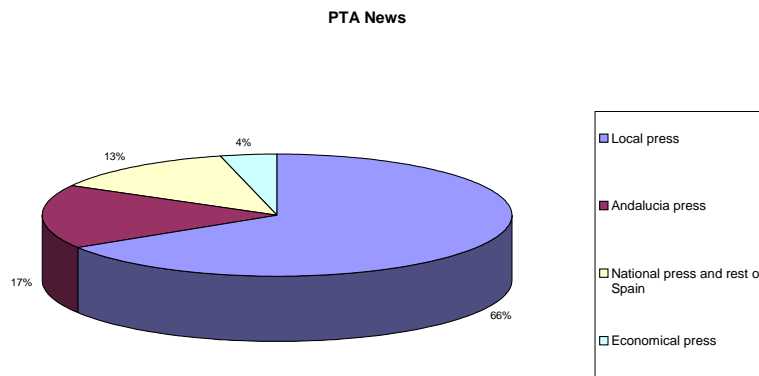
EL IDEARIO

“El Ideario” is a daily digital newspaper with information about the Technology Park of Andalucía, where you can access by the web site (www.pta.es). It offers, apart from the notices at the web site, interviews, notice board...etc. The contents are carefully designed to capture and hold the audience attention.

TECHNOLOGY PARK OF ANDALUCIA AT MEDIAS

Just to give an example about the PTA at Media, during 2005 there were 1.293 notices that appeared at Media.

This information was published at a local, regional, national and international level, with the following distribution:



To concrete, at PTA we consider that Media is really a necessity in today's world and by using the different way of communication exposed, we pretend to use Media selectively and reflectively.

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