

17 March 2020

Tips to help your event communications throughout the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Communications strategies are more important than ever during this fast-changing period. Here's some over-arching prompts to help you shape what's necessary depending on your own event circumstances.

1. Review your own planned PR/comms activity for your event

Consideration should be given to your existing PR/ Marketing plans for your event.

Do they need to change? Do you have event launch plans in place which may need to be altered/ postponed/ cancelled? Do you have paid social media marketing plans in place to promote your event which may need to be reviewed?

2. Consider your own crisis communications planning in case of event postponement/cancellation

Do you have a crisis communications plan? A crisis communication plan is a set of guidelines used to prepare a business for an emergency or unexpected event. These plans include steps to take, and how to communicate with your key stakeholders and should aim to include the following:

Defining Roles and Responsibilities

It's worthwhile identifying who will do what within your team to enable collaborative and effective working during this fast-changing period (appreciating there will be different sizes/make-up of teams from large organisations to smaller volunteering groups). Consider who will be in charge of approving communications, managing social channels, contacting stakeholders etc. (see below).

Identification of your stakeholders

This is essentially about identifying who needs to know updates regarding your event. Your plan should identify all the key stakeholders who you will need to communicate with. Examples include artists, performers, trustees, suppliers, ticket buyers, wider audiences, partners, funders, venue.

Key Messages

Your plan should consider what you will communicate to your identified stakeholders and your key messages for each audience – BEING CLEAR and UNDERSTANDING EACH AUDIENCES NEEDS is critical. It might be useful to draw up a core script, some key over-arching agreed messages and FAQs.

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Channels

Identify how you will communicate with your key stakeholders. Whatever channels you use for communication, it's important to make certain that your messaging always remains the same across multiple channels to ensure clarity. Think about what you may need to prepare ahead of any announcements about your event i.e. new web pages for specific information on Coronavirus in the context of your event etc.

Timelines

Identify when you will communicate with your key stakeholders. Your plan should set your timeline for communicating important information about your event both in the result of postponement/cancellation as well as your channels for communicating the information and your key messages.

3. Be pro-active

It's important to be as proactive as possible with your communications. Staying in control of the situation and providing regular updates is vital. Even if you have no new information, it's best to provide a quick update via your central communication channels that lets people know that they will be notified if anything changes.

4. Keep to the facts

Effective crisis communication is grounded in ensuring all messaging is aligned to credible and reliable sources such as Government advice and the NHS.

5. Two-way communication

Ensure that you have feedback mechanisms in place which enable your key stakeholders to contact you if required. In the event of cancellation where refunds will be required, ensure you have all the necessary processes in place for customers to be able to contact you whether that's via telephone or dedicated email.

6. Prepare for media enquiries

In the event of cancellation/postponement, it may be that the media are interested in speaking to you as part of their regular reporting on the impact of Coronavirus. Consider if you will respond to any enquiries, and how you will respond to the media by preparing key over-arching approved messaging and identifying a key spokesperson from your organisation to attribute quotes and/or handle any media interviews should you wish to comment.

7. Monitor and re-evaluate

COVID-19 is a rapidly changing situation so make sure you continue to monitor the advice and guidance from the UK and Scottish Governments and health organisations. As the situation evolves re-evaluate your communications plan and determine whether you need to issue further updates about your event in light of any new guidance or change in situation.