Lunch and Learn
Shouting about SVW

Briefing: Shouting about SVW

This briefing was written as part of a Student Hubs and NUS Lunch and Learn webinar, delivered as part of the preparations for Student Volunteering Week 2015. This briefing outlines how you can use social media and other tools to communicate a message. It also explains how to start your work with local press.

Introduction

As a National campaign, communicating our messaging effectively is essential to the success of Student Volunteering Week. This briefing is split into two sections: press and communications.

Press

What is newsworthy?

Not everything that happens during Student Volunteering Week will be picked up by journalists or media organisations, but much of it *is* newsworthy. Here are some things that are more likely to get your story or project noticed:

- Facts and stats (E.g. how many tonnes of food have you collected for the local food bank?)
- Ease of understanding – try and explain in plain English and avoid jargon
- Opinions and controversy
- Human interest – is there an emotive, human angle about your project?
- Audience relevance – who will be reading/hearing the story? Can you make it relevant to them?
- Timing – try and stick to any deadlines and find out when is the *best* time to tell people about your work
- Difference – what is unique or different about this project? What angle does it have?
- Stunts make for interesting stories!

Remember:
1. Local media are much more likely to be interested in your work – focus on them first and once they're engaged, talk to National media
2. You don't need to rely on media organisations to promote your story – blog about it/use social media yourself to spread the word

How to create a press release

Headline - Don't try and write your headline in the style of a newspaper. Avoid puns or trying to intrigue the journalist by only alluding to details. The headline should be one or two lines (and no longer than necessary to get the

information in) that leave the journalist in no doubt as to why the story is news.

Embargo - Embargoes tell the journalist the information in them is not for publication until after a certain time and/or date. With the different deadlines for weekly local press it's often best not to use them so just write 'FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE' at the top. However, if you have an event, a campaign launch, or a sabbatical officer will be making comments in a speech, then it can give journalists time to prepare the story so that they are ready to cover it the morning that it happens. Most embargoes end at one minute past minute on the day of publication to avoid ambiguity and allow daily newspapers to cover the story. Most journalists will respect embargoes but there is nothing to stop them publishing as soon as they want to. Find out when your weeklies go to press.
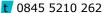
Lead paragraph - The first paragraph of your release should contain all of the relevant information – who, what, when, where, why and how. By the end of that paragraph which should be no longer than 4 or 5 lines the journalist should have enough information that they could start investigating the story even if they didn't read the rest.

The body - The rest of your release, which in most instances should stretch no more than 2 more short paragraphs, should provide some context and relevant information that backs up your take on the story.

Quotes - The name and job title of the person giving the quote should be at the top of the quote in bold type.

After the end - Make sure there a clear contact details, including for outside office hours, so that journalists can follow up if they need to. This is the place to put any relevant information the journalist might need but was too long to put in the body, you might also want to put links to any reports referenced or any comments you are responding to. Journalists are often looking for case-studies so if you

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already have some then put a brief outline in the notes at the end. You can also include a 'boilerplate' a bit of standard information about your organisation here.

Communications

Here are 10 ways to ensure your communications are engaging, relevant, and professional:

1. **Understand your audience**
   - Different audiences on different channels – who are you speaking to? They may need the same message but in different language or with an alternate angle.
   - Analyse your followers and interactors – what engages them?

2. **Build an online community**
   - Be relevant to old and new followers
   - Post valuable information
   - Polls and questions create more of a community feel to your communications

3. **Interact with online influencers**
   - Work out who they are – who is connected to you with a large following or communications reach?
   - Tweet at them or mention them on Facebook
   - Target them directly with relevant content
   - Ask them to do a guest blog for you

4. **Integrate your digital platforms**
   - Hootsuite or Tweetdeck are useful for integration (links below)
   - *Some* integration is good if the message is relevant for all audiences, but be careful – don't automatically link your social media platforms together

   as this looks lazy and is boring for your followers
   - Linking up should be meaningful and useful to your audiences
   - It isn't just about digital media – think about how you integrate print media with digital
   - Ensure your pictures and messaging are consistent

5. **Original content is everything**
   - Don't rely on re-posting as it is boring for your audiences
   - Pictures in digital media get more interaction
   - Buzzfeed is a great way to create fun and original content

6. **Tone of voice is important**
   - Think about your brand and your audiences to ensure your tone of voice is appropriate
   - Keep it consistent across different channels
   - Check your posts before publishing them
   - Look at best practice – find a brand or campaign that you like – why do you like it?

7. **Think about the structure of your post**
   - Have you used your 140 characters of a Tweet well?
   - Does the Facebook post flow nicely?
   - Keep your blog posts short
   - Try and include a relevant picture

8. **Be prepared**
   - Make a communications plan that outlines key dates, key messages, and which platforms you'll use
   - Analyse the time that you get most interactions and schedule your communications for then
   - Practice 'what if' scenarios

9. **Respond**
   - Talking with your online community helps to build it, and makes people happy!
   - For posters/flyers on your campus – prepare for increased activity after a big push
   - Be proactive but also reactive

10. **Evaluate**
    - Use feedback to help you to improve
    - Twitter analytics are free for every account
    - Hootsuite and Tweetdeck also offer analytics
    - If you have a Facebook page you can look at your insights.

Further information

This briefing was created following a Student Opportunities Lunch & Learn webinar that took place on 18th December 2014.

Further reading

Buzzfeed is a social website for creating polls, quizzes and lists. It's very popular with students!
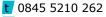
Hootsuite – a website for managing social media.

Storify – a website for creating a 'story' out of social media posts. Check out the Storify we made for the SVW Bootcamp for inspiration.

TED Talk with founder of Reddit about the power of social media.

Tweetdeck – a website for managing your Tweets.

Student Opportunities Resource Hub has information about volunteering.