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DENMARK

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Public Affairs Guidelines for National Olympic Committees

– Advocacy and communication –

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RINGS

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- EU Office of the European Olympic Committees (EOC EU Office)
- National Olympic Committee of Belgium (BOIC)
- National Olympic Committee of Bosnia and Herzegovina (OCBiH)
- National Olympic Committee of Cyprus (COC)
- National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark (DIF)
- National Olympic Committee of Greece (HOC)
- National Olympic Committee of Italy (CONI)
- National Olympic Committee of Liechtenstein (LOC)
- National Olympic Committee of Lithuania (LNOC)
- National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of the Netherlands (NOC*NSF)
- National Olympic Committee of Slovakia (SOSC)
- National Olympic Committee of Türkiye (TOC)
- Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU)

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Content

INTRODUCTION

The battle for a National Olympic Committees' (NOC) resources is hard. Many NOCs are small organisations, where staff resources are stretched and prioritisation of tasks is difficult. Many will therefore ask themselves if they have time at all to also engage in public affairs activities.

While it is the duty of any CEO to ask such question, we do believe that such activities are essential to the survival of an NOC.

Public affairs are essential to strengthening your organisation's reputation, legitimacy, and to nurture relationships with key stakeholders, influencing bodies and decision-makers, thereby gaining political influence.

Like any other organisation, it is important for an NOC to work strategically with public affairs. Public affairs may for instance help you to receive greater financial support from the government or municipalities, it may also help you to become aware of potential changes in legislation that could negatively influence you, or it may help you change the legislation or the implementation of legislation to ensure that you achieve your objectives.

To begin with, it is important to point out that even though you may not meet or dine with important political decisions-makers, you probably already do public affairs without being aware of it. With these Guidelines you will see that public affairs are many things and that your daily work with stakeholders, legislation, events etc. constitutes public affairs.

The purpose of these Guidelines

With these Guidelines, we aim to give you some tools and advice on to how to do public affairs in a more strategic and focused way. We try to do so in the first section, by introducing the concept of public affairs and by explaining why we believe it is important for an NOC to invest time and resources in it. We then spend some time making sure that you reflect on your own national culture, traditions and political structures, as these will influence the way you do public affairs in the most efficient way in your country.

In the second section we elaborate on how to do public affairs by introducing a "10-element approach" to public affairs. With this approach, we take you through different scenarios such as analysing the situation, what your objectives might be, how to build and maintain good relations and alliances, who your key audiences are, how to deliver key messages, timing, communication channels and how to follow up on your public affairs work.

In the third and final section, we dive into crisis communication and media management. We examine concepts such as risk assessment and coordination, how to prepare for crises and how to build a communication contingency plan.

What are Public Affairs?

Public affairs are an often overseen and undervalued area, with few having any real idea about what public affairs are and how good these may be conducted.

Frequently public affairs are equated with lobbying. That is not all wrong, as lobbying forms one part of it. We can say that public affairs are much more than just lobbying, and you will see why in later sections of these Guidelines.

Public affairs are all about strengthening your organisation's reputation, legitimacy, relationship with key stakeholders, and ability to influence bodies and decision-makers, thereby gaining political influence. Simply put, good public affairs are about having and keeping good relations. It is about the ability to make your interests relevant for the right decision-makers. You need to find the interest and point of view that you and the decision-maker share, to enable both of you to win on the solution you propose. The challenge and solution you propose must be relevant for the decision-makers' own agenda and policy.

Public affairs are about the long haul. You will not see the return on your investment tomorrow, but will most likely have to wait until further down the line. Indeed, when the effort does finally pay off, one often needs to share the success with others, and you might never get the shine of all your hard work.

Public affairs are also about having knowledge on an issue, having the facts and being clear. It is important that you present a solution in a reliable way, with good arguments, numbers, and cases to support the solution, and that you believe in the solution yourself. All this is elaborated in section two.

At last, public affairs are also about communication and media and therefore section three deals with communication.

Why is Public Affairs important for an NOC?

Often NOCs on the face of it do not see the benefit of engaging actively in public affairs. "He who lives quietly, lives well", an old proverb goes. There are good reasons, however, for the NOCs to start working strategically with public affairs.

Like any other organisation, an NOC is part of its surrounding society. The actions of legislators, governments and partner organisations have potentially a major impact on an NOC's ability to fulfil its strategic objectives. Ignoring activities such as advocacy, lobbying and public outreach risks impacting an NOC's ability to successfully achieve the objectives which it has set for itself.

Many NOCs will often feel that their work is ignored by government, policymakers, or other stakeholders. The fact is that all these actors are dependent on receiving a flow of information from a wide range of individuals and organisations. Their decisions can only be as good as the information they are based on.

Individual policymakers are highly influential. Maintaining good relationships and promoting research that helps them realise their policy objectives will have long term benefits that should outlast the resources invested in it.

A few examples of the benefits of engaging in public affairs could be:

- Having built and/or maintained a wide network among important stakeholders, policymakers and government officials will help promote solutions to problems which benefit the strategic aims of the organisation;
- Being aware of potential changes to legislation may help minimise the potential adverse effects that these changes might have on your organisation's ability to achieve its objectives. Sometimes you might be

able to "solve" a problem even before it becomes a problem at all;

- Being proactive in public affairs means providing the needed information to the policy and decision-makers on the potentially negative impact of a certain legislation or decision on sport. Often, the policy and decision-makers simply do not have enough information on the sport sector and they might unintentionally make a proposal that could have a negative impact on the whole sector.
- Being strategic in our outreach may potentially strengthen ties and enhance the NOC's reputation among influential partners, policy and decision-makers. This may have a series of positive effects which might include being able to attract more resources to an NOC;
- Perhaps, most importantly, being aware of – and at the forefront of – what happens in parliament, government and civil service will help you defend, secure, and in some instances, increase the financial support you receive from the taxpayers.

National cultures, structures and traditions have an impact on your PA strategy

When reading these Guidelines, it is important that you interpret the advice with the knowledge of structures, traditions and cultures which exist in your country and jurisdiction. While these Guidelines attempt to outline good practise examples, you must evaluate if such an approach will provide a positive outcome in your jurisdiction.

One example could be that in some countries it is legitimate to work with all political parties elected to said country's national or regional parliament. Mobilising the necessary votes for a potential legislative solution will in some counties be easy, as you can work with any political party. Yet in other countries or jurisdictions this situation could be very different, due to e.g., regional sectarianism, where some parties might work for local independence, or if certain fringe parties hold views and values which are untenable for your organisation to be associated with. In such cases, the NOC needs to evaluate if the fallout from working with such parties might overshadow the value of the legislative win.

The same considerations are important in other areas. In some countries and jurisdictions, informal and direct contacts with elected parliamentarians are the norm, whilst in others such informal contacts might be viewed as disrespectful. These matters are extremely sensitive, and therefore difficult to give direct advice on. We therefore encourage all those reading these Guidelines to always have their own culture, structures, traditions and history in mind and adapt each advice to these variables.

How to read the Guidelines

The Guidelines are divided into three sections:

<u>The first section</u>, which you have already began, introduces the concept of public affairs and explains why it is important for an NOC to engage in public affairs and why it is crucial to consider national culture,

history and traditions when doing such work.

The second section unfolds the question of how to carry out public affairs. This section is divided into ten key elements that we ask you to consider when doing public affairs. We would like to emphasise that, while in a perfect world all the elements described might be considered every time, we understand that this is not always possible (and at times not needed). These Guidelines should therefore be used as a guide as opposed to a checklist. The golden rule must always be that it is better to do some of the elements rather than none.

Another reason why we do not wish you to look at these as mandatory 'steps' is that often public affairs are not chronological in time, but rather are done on a more ad hoc basis when issues or opportunities arise. In that sense, public affairs can be based on intuition or timing. Sometimes, you might build relations to a politician or an organisation without having a problem to solve, but just because you met at an event. You might find that you can use this relationship when a problem arises. Other times, you might decide that you want to influence a specific policy field first and then try to build relationships to people who have the power to influence the policy in that field.

By calling them "elements", we want to make it clear that you do not have to follow the paragraphs in any specific order and you do not need to have a specific problem before starting certain public affairs activities. Public affairs are a cyclical and never-ending task that you need to be aware of every day.

With that said, we still believe that with the Guidelines we may place the art of public affairs into main boxes that will assist you in working more strategically and systematically in this area.

In the third and final section we deal with crises communication. Crisis communication is - by the sheer nature of it - extremely difficult to prepare for. It is an art which needs to be performed while many eyes are watching you and the pressure is mounting from all sides. It therefore also makes it a difficult art to perform, but we hope that some of the tools presented in the Guidelines may help you prepare and perform in times of crisis.

HOW TO DO PUBLIC AFFAIRS?

Public affairs might sound like an extravagant exercise. Lobbying, advocacy – whatever you wish to call it – often carry the connotation of fancy businessmen in smart suits, being engaged at fancy dinners and hanging out with important political decisions-makers. While we cannot say that this does not exist, it is certainly not the prototype of everyday life. Such stereotyping surely ignores the legwork, which is vital for any public affairs activity to be successful.

Being able to influence anything – whether it be legislation, funding proposals, public debates etc. – you need to first know when the legislation is being discussed, when funding proposals are being drawn up or when public debates are taking place. Often organisations will not notice until it is too late. When legislation reaches its final reading in the parliament, it is too late to influence it. When funding proposals are sent out to consultation, governments are often very reluctant to make significant changes to it. Equally, when public opinion has been formed, it is extremely difficult and labour-intensive to change it.

We acknowledge, that keeping on top of everything all the time is impossible. This is also why it is important that you always link your public affairs initiatives with your strategic planning (see the RINGS Handbook on strategic management). Having done your strategic planning, you should be able to answer two important questions:

1. What policy areas are important to your organisation?
2. What resources do you have at your disposal?

The 10-element approach outlined below should be tailored in relations to those two questions. Realising that you have limited resources to do public affairs, it would not make sense to spend lots of them in monitoring policy areas which are not a priority for you. Your strategic plan should therefore guide and inform the areas you choose to focus on.

Below we have listed an overview of the ten elements of how to do public affairs:

1. Analyse the situation;
2. Set your objectives;
3. Use evidence;
4. Build (and maintain) good relations;
5. Build alliances;
6. Identify key persons;
7. Form key messages;
8. Keep in mind that timing is everything;
9. Use right communication channels;
10. Follow-up and repeat.

Case study on how NOT to do it!

- Run your own agenda and don't think about the decision-makers' interests;
- Make sure to spend a very long time on meetings even though the decision-makers are busy people and hate to waste time;
- Be brooding, arrogant and rude;
- Hide your intention, embellish the truth and make PA dirty business;
- Only point out problems but do not come up with solutions;
- Always make sure you shine a light on yourself and take all the credit for political wins;
- Consider other organisations as enemies rather than alliance partners.

Element 1: Analyse the situation

Any plan is only as good as the information it is built on. Collection of information can take many shapes and sizes. It can be an enormous task to monitor and search through all information, but it really does not have to be as complicated and resource-intensive as it might sound.

Gathering huge amounts of data has never been easier. However, having a huge pile of data will not help if you do not have the means, time, or competencies to make sense of it. Therefore, it is important that you link your monitoring efforts with your strategic planning, as described above.

The collection has one specific purpose: to inform you about three key questions.

These are:

(i) What are the characteristics of the issue?

(ii) Who are the key decision-makers in this?

(iii) Are other relevant stakeholders influenced by or influencing the issue?

Characteristics of the issue

Knowing the key characteristics of the issue is important when designing the outreach or campaign that you are planning to influence the issue. You should try and understand what sub-issues might arise (e.g., does the issue have unintentional consequences for you or other stakeholders) and what controversies might surface in the process. Your data should also help you understand what policy stages the issue need to go through (e.g., for legislation: readings in the parliament and committee stages) and – particularly in the context of political and legislative issues – what degree of partisan differences exists. An issue which is newsworthy may easily spill over to the public arena and require a different approach than a campaign which can be conducted exclusively behind the scenes.

The key decision-makers

Effective advocacy requires knowledge about who has the power to change policy for better or worse. Your data should help you identify the decision-makers who carry a significant influence on the wording, implementation, or evaluation of an issue. It may also be useful if the data shows who might be gatekeepers for access to the decision-makers. To get access to high-level politicians, you often have to go through a political advisor or other people in similar roles.

Other relevant stakeholders influencing the issue

It will also be useful to consider who else has an interest in this issue. Like you, other stakeholders will prepare data on the issue, and they might be on the same side as you or might try to influence in the opposite direction. Having influential and socioeconomically advantaged people on your side will obviously change your approach significantly. Just as having extremely influential stakeholders pushing in the opposite direction might make you consider if spending resources fighting against it is worth it at all.

Analysing the situation part of public affairs campaigning can be the most laborious part of the task. This is also why larger organisations often will buy software or consultancy support for this. However, for a smaller organisation making its first attempt in this area, you will get far by monitoring parliament or ministries' websites, signing up to newsletters from key stakeholders or setting up regular informal meetings with key individuals.

Which newsletters to sign up to?

- Newsletters from government in general;
- Newsletter from ministry in charge of sport;
- Newsletter from parliamentary committee responsible for sport;
- Newsletter from association of local and regional authorities.

Element 2: Set your objectives

A common mistake, when engaging in public affairs campaigning is not having a clearly defined campaign objective. Often organisations will have an objective of stopping “X” legislation! But such objectives might both be unrealistic and unspecific. Instead, it will make sense to consider questions like: which part of the legislation is unfavourable to us? How will it influence us unfavourably? And which concrete changes could be made to the legislation to mitigate this?

Example: VAT Legislation

In many European countries, VAT contributes significantly towards the country's tax income. Trying to stop a country from having a VAT legislation is, therefore, unrealistic. Instead, you might concentrate on areas where VAT contributes significantly to the tax bills of local sport clubs. Often, this will be the purchase of equipment, as this is a usually significant investment for any club. Seeing if you can ring-fence investment in equipment as “VAT exempt” would therefore be a much better strategy.

Defining more concrete goals will help you design the campaign and inform your work further down the line. Concrete goals will e.g., help you later in designing the message, drawing up proposals, creating alliances and knowing which decision-makers to approach.

Be aware that you must prioritise and concentrate on the most important issues and goals. Public affairs campaigning is not a shopping list of all the things you would like to be changed.

Two important things to consider in the process: what is the problem and what is our solution to it?

Defining the problem and formulating good solutions

The first thing you need to consider is how to define the problem. A problem can always be seen and understood in different ways and you need to be very clear on how you understand the problem. A clear and delimited definition of the problem is the prerequisite for good and precise solutions.

When the problem is defined, you can start developing good solutions to it.

Below are some tips for formulating good solutions:

- Make sure to present a solution that benefits many people (and not just elite sport athletes or few clubs);
- Make sure the solution is possible and realisable and that the decision-maker you turn to can do something to implement your solution;
- Make sure the solution is presented in a short and precise way and that it is easy to understand;
- Substantiate your points with numbers and data (see more beneath);
- Substantiate your points with cases and stories from the real world (see more beneath).

Once you have identified the solutions, there may be a need to redefine the problem – not for yourself, but for the decision-makers to whom you need to present the problem and solution. It may often be powerful to present a problem with a new angle so that precisely your solution seems to be the obvious one.

Element 3: Use evidence

Solid evidence is increasingly required when presenting political solutions. Often decisions-makers will ask: what is the evidence that this solution will solve the problem or what is the evidence that this is a problem at all? It is more difficult for them to deny the issue you raise if you have the solid evidence to justify your case.

Therefore, it is essential to provide numbers, data and scientific evidence that proves problem exists and requires your solution. Data and scientific evidence can be found in many ways. Often different national universities, public authorities and agencies or interest groups conduct surveys or research on various topics. Sometimes it can also be beneficial to look outside your own country and present numbers from other countries to which you can compare yourself, or use worldwide analyses.

As a supplement or an alternative to data and numbers, it could strengthen your position to present cases or narrations from real people who are suffering because of the problem or, alternatively, have tried your proposed solution and are benefitting from it. The powerful thing about real cases is that it touches the emotions in a way that numbers cannot. Even though politicians and civil services often want to see the effects and evidence in numbers, they are still only human and are greatly influenced by arguments that touch their emotions.

A recommendation is to have both evidence of numbers and narrations. This means you could switch between them depending on who you approach. A rule of thumb worth remembering is that politicians are often more persuaded by narrations while the civil service is more persuaded by numbers and scientific evidence.

Another important point to be aware of is the counterarguments and the data that can be used against you and your proposed solution. There will always be data to show different results. E.g., data shows that physical activity among children promotes their ability to learn in school, yet there are still some reports that show no such effect. It is important that you know these reports and have some good arguments for why these are invalid or are part of the minority.

Element 4: Build (and maintain) good relations

Building and maintaining relations is the bedrock of public affairs. Relations to politicians, civil services, other organisations and institutions are crucial to your public affairs job. How to build and use relationships may seem rather fluffy and is hard to put into a formula. However, we will try to give you some tips and tricks to build relationships. It is also important to notice that you probably already have some good relations to important people, and that you just have to use them in a more strategic way.

How to build relationships?

It may not seem manageable to start building the right relationships, but it does not have to be that complicated.

The first thing you should do is examine which stakeholders have an influence on or are active on the agenda that you would like to impact (link to the RINGS stakeholder tool).

These may be politicians, civil services, other organisations that have similar interests and opinions as you, and equally organisations that have very different opinions and interests on the agenda as you.

When you have selected the right stakeholders, you can start building a relationship with them. Remember that some relationships are easy and come naturally, whilst some you must work hard for. That is not a problem. Often you will use the relationships that come easy and you already have a lot of good relationships with previous colleagues, fellow students or private friends that are now working in an organisation that you can work with to promote your case. It is always a good idea to have relationships with both the people you agree with and those you do not.

How do you make yourself relevant to decision-makers?

Politics and public opinion may be a crowded area and you will have to compete with a range of other organisations which also wish to capture the attention of key decision-makers and other relevant stakeholders.

To be a relevant stakeholder, you must first have some knowledge of and expertise in the area which makes you relevant and therefore worth listening to. Often NOCs have a lot of expertise in sports, and can answer questions relating to professional athletes, the Olympics and sports facilities. That is very relevant when you want to influence the sports agenda and build relationships with the ministry in charge of sports.

To make yourself a relevant stakeholder for other decision-makers, you must be more than just a sports organisation working towards winning Olympic medals. You need to broaden your story, about who you are and what sports can do for society, so that it becomes clear that the NOC also takes social responsibility and contributes to something bigger. This broader storytelling about the NOC makes it relevant and legitimate for the decision-makers to invest time and start listening to your wishes.

Good advice for building relationships:

- Build personal relationships. It takes time to build good relationships Think of relationship building as a process rather than an event;
- Do your research beforehand and try to find something you have in common. Consider also what you have which is of value to him/her;
- Be honest – also by telling and sharing something about yourself. Show them that you trust them, and they will begin to trust you;
- Be likeable but also be yourself. You often build the best relationship if you are authentic and not putting on an act;
- Try to shape meetings as a conversation and not a sales pitch. It is important to be a good listener when building relationships;
- Be present where the decision-makers and stakeholders are. Or invite them out to do something together with you. You may for instance invite them to an elite sports event or to visit a grassroots sports club. In this way you really have a chance to show them all the good things you do instead of just telling them;
- Overcome your fear of rejection. You will soon learn that decision-makers are busy people who often do not respond to invitations or cancel meetings with short notice;
- Be persistent and keep taking the initiative. It takes a while to break

through to busy people and to win their trust;

- Be patient!

In international public affairs you might need to build relationships with people of different cultural backgrounds. Here it is important to try to learn about the person's culture or take part in cultural events. You also have to understand that people from different cultures do things differently than you. It may be challenging; and you may have to step out of your comfort zone. Be aware that it is okay to make mistakes and people are generally very forgiving as long as your intentions are good.

How to maintain relationships?

As previously said, building relationships is a process rather than an event. That means you also need to spend time and energy maintaining the relations you have already built.

To make sure that you can use the relationships when in trouble or times of need, you must also put something into the relationship. Think of the relationship as an amount of credit. You can only get something (and thereby use credit) if you have spent time to also earn some credit.

It is therefore important to invest time and resources in the relationship and "give" something to the stakeholder. It could means helping them when they need a favour, invite them to an event or simply just spend time keeping them informed of developments of interest to them. This may be done either by email, phone, social media or in a meeting depending on the relationship and the stakeholder.

Social media can be a very good and effective platform for keeping in touch with a stakeholder. Most politicians and political consultants have a Facebook, LinkedIn and/or Twitter account. Here you can follow what they post, like and comment on it. You can also post something yourself, where you tag a politician or a stakeholder and thereby create a contact. Sharing success, offering your congratulations or pointing out a problem may be a good idea. Be careful to use these platforms wisely and do not overuse them. If you comment or tag a politician too often, they might start to find you annoying and ignore you.

Another way of spending time with a stakeholder is to be present where he/she is. That could be at conferences, events and meetings in bigger forums. Try to map future events where you could be able to participate and meet the stakeholder. When you are at the event and meet the stakeholder, make sure to say hello, make small talk or have a drink or a coffee together.

Element 5: Build alliances

The greater an alliance you can build around specific policy issue, the greater the chances you will be able to influence it. At the same time, it is important to understand that working in alliances with other stakeholders carries both advantages and disadvantages.

Alliances with other stakeholders often send a much stronger signal. You will be able to tap into your partners' network, image, and prestige, just as they will be able to do the same to yours. Alliances will also in some cases make life easier for the politician or the decision-maker who you hope to influence. Policymakers will often prefer to talk with a group of stakeholders, as it is more efficient than having to meet all of them individually. Another advantage is that you will be able to pool resources and share the cost of the campaign – this has the potential of carrying synergy where the pooling of resources is likely to provide more value than the sum of each organisation doing it individually.

As always, this approach also carries some disadvantages. Being part of an alliance or coalition means that you sometimes have to compromise on the outcome. Your members might disagree with some of the partners with whom you engage, considering it as if you are "sleeping with the enemy" and coordinating such alliances often carries significant "coordination costs" such as increased meeting activity and travel.

Ongoing and lasting alliances

While this might sound like you always seek for alliances which fit the individual issue, there is often a huge benefit in having ongoing and lasting alliances. This could e.g., be an organisation that shares similar values as you, an organisation that has interest in the same field as you or an organisation that sees a great value in being associated with you or vice versa.

This comes with some significant advantages; for one, an ongoing and lasting relationship often builds more trust between the organisations involved. This makes it easy to work together, as you understand each other on a deeper level than with a new alliance. Having such knowledge about one another often limits the time wasted in co-ordination, it creates fewer misunderstandings that could cause the campaign to be less effective, and in lasting alliances you are often able to better divide the tasks that fit with the strength of each organisation. Having such lasting alliances also helps monitoring, as you'll be much better at warning each other when problems emerge.

As with everything else, such lasting alliances also have certain disadvantages; while it can be extremely effective working in trusting and lasting alliances, it will at times tie you down and limit your freedom to seek certain wins. This is a balancing act where you need to assess if the value of a certain policy win is worth more than the potential harm it might cause to the relationship.

Example: NOCs / Sports confederations

In countries where the roles of the National Olympic Committees and the sports confederations are divided between two organisations, a close and trusting relationship between the two could be valuable. The two organisations both wish for the sector to flourish, and the organisations might share the same national sports federations as members. The benefits are many, but when it comes to funding, the interest might suddenly vary. E.g. as an NOC, you need to assess if trying to maximise the funding by making most of it go to the NOC is worth the fallout with the sports confederation. Or if it is rather in the interest of both to share the money, and in that way, maintain the relationship.

Element 6: Identify key persons

You always need to consider who is the right person to approach at what time of the process. A good question to ask is: who can do something about this? For instance, if you want to influence the rules of assembly during the pandemic such as the Covid-19 crisis, it might be worth spending some time to find out who can do something about it. It makes no sense to approach the legal rapporteurs if the rules of assembly are negotiated by the health rapporteurs or the party leaders. In this part of the public affairs plan, you need to consider which of the decision-makers or stakeholders should be targeted and, importantly, when they need to be targeted.

It is important to consider two things: influence and alignment.

Firstly, it is important to consider who has influence on the decision we wish to push for. Influence however, is not always as straight forward to assess. One could look at formal influence e.g., who writes the rules, who is in power or who holds the majority on certain issues. This can be useful, as such individuals naturally wield significant influence, but this also often means that they can be difficult to reach. It may, therefore, often be valuable to look at influence in a broader sense.

It is useful, secondly, to look at the alignment of decision-makers. Often you will have some decision-makers who already align themselves strongly with what you wish to achieve. You could decide to target such already aligned decision-makers, making them an allied – or even a spokesperson – of your cause. Should you choose such an approach, the key objective of your campaign would then be to provide these decision-makers with evidence, arguments, policy proposals etc. Another audience might be undecided policymakers, who have yet to make up their mind. These may also be extremely important, but the messages you send need to be different from the ones you send to the previous group.

Element 7: Form key messages

Elements 2 and 3 of these Guidelines try to identify which content, arguments and information a campaign should be built upon. Both parts are very inward-looking; what do we want to achieve? What evidence do we have for this being a problem? And how would our solution solve the problem? Element 7, however, asks you to look beyond your own interests. It is very easy to be caught-up in the opinion that a problem needs to be solved for you, your members or others close to you. Here it is important to remember that decision-makers do not exist to make you happy. What matters most is that the message is shaped in a way that communicates the common good. Messages with focus on the public good in their messaging strategies often have much better chances in being successful than messages with focus on sports own self-interest. Furthermore, it is important that the key message(s) is/are very clear and understandably defined. They should not get lost with other things.

It is important that the key messages will be backed up by evidence. This is why it is useful already in element 2 to be aware of the evidence you might have at hand.

Moreover, you need to be ready with a political alternative. Just pointing out flaws, mistakes or unintended consequences will get you a reputation of a nuisance. Whenever you want to change something, you always need to be prepared with a solution to the problem (element 2). You need to have considered how the law can be changed, what language could be inserted into the proposal or how such unintended consequences are best avoided.

When preparing both message, evidence and proposal, you always need to have the key audience (element 6) in mind. The message, evidence and proposals used will change according to whom you are speaking to. Talking to e.g., civil service in ministries will often require detailed evidence and alternative proposals, as these are often experts who want to know exactly what the problem is and how you propose to solve it, while politicians rarely wish for such detailed proposals and rather want an overall message on how changing something will be of benefit to his or her voters.

Example: Position paper

Many NOC and sport organisations draft a position paper (e.g. Memorandum) with a list of recommendations for sports policy for the political elections. This can be for elections at transnational, national, regional and local level. With this position paper, you can organise meetings with representatives of each political party to discuss your priorities and concerns. Following are some of the reasons that make it interesting to draft such a position paper: to influence the electoral programmes of the political parties (e.g. more focus on sport political issues), to meet and get to know the relevant contact persons within the political parties dealing with sport or other issues that you raise; and to establish working relationships after the elections. In this regard, elections are an interesting entry point to establish contacts.

The following things are important to take into consideration when drafting a position paper:

- Try to find the right balance between remaining politically neutral and still getting your main points across.
- Where do you gather your input? It is important to reach out to your internal stakeholders to voice the concerns from different groups (federations, athletes, coaches, clubs, volunteers, etc.).
- Evidence is key to convince politicians about the importance of your statements. If you can demonstrate that these recommendations are based on a stakeholder consultation, it will strengthen your position.
- Be careful with how you analyse the current situation, as it might be considered by ruling political parties as a criticism of their policy choices.
- Be precise in what you demand. For example: all organisations will ask for additional funding, so provide examples or details on the activities that you require additional resources for.
- Sending a position paper in itself is not enough. You need to follow-up by trying to get a meeting and by keeping in touch with these representatives on a regular basis. Only contacting these persons in election times is not sufficient.

Element 8: Keep in mind that timing is everything

Timing is – as in many other cases in life – everything. This is why every public affairs plan should incorporate a timetable and an overview of which policymakers will be contacted when and how (element 5 and 6). Too many public affairs campaigns are not focused on speaking to the right people at the right time with the right material and evidence. In general, it is many times better to try to influence the issue as early as possible. The further the potential legislation has reached in the process of drafting or passing different phases, the more complicated it gets to try to change certain parts of it. Thus, it is very important to constantly monitor the arising topics and their impact, and to be active as early as possible.

A central point here is, once again, to be careful not to overuse a relation or a contact. It is important to consider how important this problem is to you and how much credit you have with the relationship. Sometimes if you consider that the issue is not that important right now and you have already used your contact a lot lately, it might be wise not to mention your problem. Sometimes you may think that it will be unwise to mention your issue but then an opportunity arises to sneak your solution in anyway. It sounds rather fluffy but, in the end, you often have to depend on your own intuition.

Like many other things in public affairs, timing is not an exact science. When going public with a proposal you need to accept that luck is a major player whether a proposal is timed rightly or wrongly. Many thoroughly, thought-out proposals that have been submitted for rigorous analysis by expensive consultants have failed – not because they have been bad proposals but due to unfortunate timing. This may be due to something that is completely out of your control e.g., other news stories, changing public opinion or rivalling proposals.

Understanding that not everything can be controlled, and that at times you are at the mercy of things out of your control, it is, however, still important to spend a bit of time considering timing. This could e.g., include:

- What rivalling media stories can we expect that day?
- Are politicians occupied by other meetings?
- Do we know about other cases which might be published on the same day?

Element 9: Use right communication channels

Having identified a problem (element 1), defined your objectives (element 2), created the necessary relations and alliances (element 3 and 4), found the key audiences you wish to talk to (element 5) and decided what message you wish to communicate (element 6) when (element 7), you now need to decide what channels you might use to communicate it. The channels can be many, and like anything else, they may vary depending on your objectives, audience and message. One of the most critical decisions to be made is whether to communicate in public or private and directly to the decision-makers.

Going public involves using channels, which reach the public at large. This might include channels such as press releases, media interviews, social media, press conferences or other public announcements. While these channels might be useful in stirring up a feeling among the public and put pressure on decision-makers, they need to be used with care. Many decision-makers do not wish to be at the receiving end of a public campaign. Instead, you risk irritating the target of your campaign and burning the bridges to key decision-makers.

Example: How the Turkish Olympic Committee handled the Covid-19 pandemic

With the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in Türkiye in March 2020, among other measures, all the sports centres and halls were closed indefinitely. Turkish athletes who had already won or were on their way to win quotas for the postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games had no way but to train at home. (element 1)

Continuation of this lockdown would undermine or greatly impair the preparations of these athletes. Having identified the problem, TOC set its objective to have those sports facilities opened for the use of concerned Olympic athletes as early as possible. The only solution was to create bubble-like environments in those facilities where all the athletes would strictly respect all COVID-secure measures. (element 2)

As most of those facilities were owned by the General Directorate of Sports Services, the Ministry of Youth (to liaise with the Sports and Ministry of Health) was identified as the key decision-maker to approach. (element 6) TOC prepared its key messages, a comprehensive list of measures proposed to be taken in the facilities, and started a PA campaign to achieve its objective (element 7). The same efforts were made towards some local governments, (mainly the Greater Metropolitan Municipalities of Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir) who also owned some of the relevant facilities.

As a result, the Ministry of Youth and Sports opened all the Turkish Olympic Preparation Centres (TOHM) and its other facilities to the Olympic athletes to train individually or as teams on 26 April 2020. Local governments followed suit to open their facilities on the 1st of June.

Later on, a PA campaign was directed for priority vaccination of those Turkish athletes who were either on the Olympic teams or were likely to qualify. As a result, the athletes and the other members of Team Türkiye were declared a part of a higher priority group for getting the Covid-19 vaccine in April 2021 (element 10).

Doing public affairs in private is often a better tool in the first instance. Here, you rely on more private communication channels such as face-to-face meetings, online meetings, phone calls, e-mails etc. Deciding which channels to use is often a balancing act but a key factor is that it should be based on the objectives, audience and message of your campaign.

Social media

Social media is continually expanding – both in number and in dissemination. Most people and organisations have accounts on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. The target groups on the different social media channels are constantly becoming more fluid but there are, however, a number of characteristics:

- Twitter

  The target group is generally politicians and journalists. The short form in tweets makes the medium suitable for quickly spreading punchlines to the outside world. In addition, Twitter easily invites for debates if the subject is controversial. Because of the very short form, it is always good to be able to link to e.g., a press release, position paper, an interview or the like.

- LinkedIn

  The target group is politicians and stakeholders from your professional network. Unlike Twitter, longer texts and even articles may be released in LinkedIn's own format.

- Facebook

  Suitable primarily if you need a more popular approach and wish to communicate more broadly to the population.

On social media, tagging the right people and using appropriate hashtags generally will result in your posts reaching a relevant target group.

Element 10: Follow up and repeat

As earlier described, doing public affairs is a continuous task. Still, this final step is often and easily forgotten in many organisations. The pleasure of having run a successful campaign and being able to celebrate a win, or the deflated feeling of not having been able to change opinion, will often overshadow the desire to ensure proper evaluation. This is, however, an increasingly important aspect. Lots of advanced (and expensive) tools exist, but it does not have to be that complicated. What is important, is that you try to go through what worked well and what did not. This will ensure that your next campaign will be even better, just as much as it will save you from making the same mistakes again in the future.

Learning, however, should not be the only reason to complete this part. Having, for example, been successful in lobbying for changes to legislation, it is also good to consider implementation of this. This includes questions like: who oversees implementation? What is the timeline for these changes to be introduced? And how can we ensure that these changes are implemented as we intended? Often the trick is to put your organisation in a position, where you are able to check the implementation process, while ensuring that all the tasks do not land on your desk. A rule of thumb is that it is often preferable to have a seat in a steering committee rather than in a working group when a proposal should be implemented.

In this step you should also consider if an expiration date exists on your proposal. In some jurisdictions, legislation will have an expiry date after which it needs to be renegotiated. If such date exists, it is important that you are aware of it so that you will be able to lobby in favour of a proposal being extended or otherwise.

CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Introduction

Communication is an important and useful tool for managing crises - both the short and standalone ones and the longer-lasting and comprehensive ones. Therefore, it is important to include communication when dealing with a current crisis.

Two crises are rarely alike and individual crisis situations should therefore be analysed individually on a case by case basis and communication should be adapted to the current situation - both in terms of the scope of action, messages, target groups and channels.

Risk assessment

Whether you are in a sudden crisis, or in a situation that could have been anticipated, it is always a good idea to perform a risk assessment. If the crisis is acute and sudden, there is rarely time for major preparations, but at least it is a good idea to appoint a crisis team, which can quickly take stock of the situation, decide on the first actions and delegate relevant tasks.

In such cases, where you know a crisis is under way, you have the opportunity to be a bit more prepared. Some organisations have a template for managing crises, including a template for crisis communication, but in any case, it is a good idea to consider which elements are particularly critical for you as an organisation. In a risk assessment, one should consider, among other things, the following elements:

- Economic impact;
- Societal consequences;
- The risk of loss of credibility and devalued image and reputation;
- How strong is the probability of the above happening?

In short: What is the threat assessment and how likely is it that the threat assessment will become a reality? The risk assessment gives you greater bearing on which actions should be implemented - also in the sense of communication.

Coordination

Coordination between professionals on the topic in question, communication professionals and management is important for getting well through a crisis and, depending on the size of the crisis, it is a good idea to appoint a task force or a definite crisis team. It is a matter of establishing clear roles, access to relevant knowledge, coordination, implementation and resoluteness.

In broad terms, a taskforce or a crisis team is a good foundation for crisis management. For the communication officer, the gains include rapid access to knowledge and the opportunity to be at the forefront of the crisis developments.

Preparing for the crisis communication

If there is time to prepare the crisis management, it is a good idea to initiate the following before preparing the actual communication contingency:

- Mapping stakeholders - both the internal and the external

This provides, among other things, an overview of all the target groups/recipients to be communicated to

- Make a list of contact details of stakeholders

  This helps minimise time consumption and streamline the practical part of the communication process when the situation becomes critical

- Appoint the spokespersons - both in relation to the media and to other stakeholders

  This creates clear roles and allows for media training of the spokespersons so that they are equipped to respond wisely to the critical questions

- Ensure sufficient resources and backup from the start

  Often it comes as a surprise how many resources a crisis situation requires. In the case of a prolonged crisis, there will certainly be situations in which backup is needed. The vulnerability can be minimised by ensuring sufficient resources from the very beginning - both in terms of professional competencies, knowledge and personnel.

Communication contingency

Communication contingency is a key tool in crisis management - partly as a preparation for communicating as wisely as possible in the given situations, and partly for creating consensus in the messages both internally and externally. In the case of larger nuanced differences in the communications from different individuals, it could weaken credibility and result in an escalation of the crisis.

At a minimum, the communication contingency should include:

- Main messages

  Select a handful of messages that constitute your core narrative in connection with the crisis. The messages should be used across channels and across spokespersons. Of course, the main messages should be revisited on an ongoing basis if the crisis develops.

- Q&A - the good answers to the hard questions

  Brainstorm on the critical questions which various stakeholders are expected to ask. Be sure to formulate good answers to each of the questions. Q&A is used in preparation for, for example, interviews with the media, but also as a tool to be ready with the right answers when politicians, board members or others ask about the details of the crisis.

- Spokesperson(s)

  Agree who will be the spokesperson(s) in the situation in question. In a crisis, having one spokesperson is often an advantage to minimise the risk of diverging messages or explanations.

  In crises with many facets, it may be necessary to choose several spokespersons, for example, a professional and a chief executive.

  In some cases, not choosing the most superior executive as spokesperson may initially be an advantage. If the crisis develops, it may be an additional advantage serving as a signalling effect to be able to escalate the matter upwards – also in relation to the media.

- Fact sheet

  Make a summary of relevant facts and useful documentation to help strengthen your messages. The fact sheet may be used for both internal and external communication, and may be sent to the press to help substantiate the communication.

- Communication channels

  Clarify which channels are coming into play, and towards which stakeholders, so that you make sure that your communication is aimed at the right target groups and preferably via multiple channels.

Press

The media is both a fellow player and an opponent in crisis situations. In cases where the communication efforts can be planned, it may often be an advantage to have a proactive approach to the media to be at the cutting edge of things and be involved in controlling when and which stories should be released, just as you may succeed in controlling the angle.

Ensure that you are open, honest and accessible to the media, whether you have taken a reactive or proactive approach to the press. If you try to avoid the media, if you have long response times or refuse to comment on criticism, it can be perceived as though you have something to hide and that will often cause journalists to dig deeper. If you have good answers to critical questions, you will always emerge stronger from the situation.

When choosing a proactive approach to the press, you can consider whether it is most optimal in the given situation to call a press conference (only in significant and very critical cases), to issue a press release (mass communication which potentially reaches a wide audience) or to sell the story/an interview directly to one or more media.

Social media

Social media is gradually becoming an established medium. In a crisis situation, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are generally most relevant. Read more about the different social media channels in section 2 element 9.

Internal communication

In a crisis situation, you often concentrate all your energy on external communication, but you should not forget to communicate to the internal stakeholders. Internal communication could help ensure, e.g.:

- Co-ownership of the main messages of the crisis;
- Credibility of and sympathy for the executive management;
- Increased insight that provides increased reassurance among, for example, employees;
- Less noise from the support base.