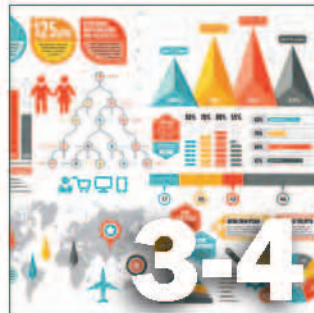


CONTENTS

Crisis Communications ..	1,5,6
Digital PR	1,6
Pitching	2
Events Calendar	2
Visual Storytelling	3,4
How I Got Here	7
The Week in PR	8



CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

How to Build the New, Trusted VW: 4 PR Views

In this crowdsourced edition of PR News, several readers requested stories about aspects of crisis communications. Coincidentally, the **Volkswagen** (VW) crisis broke into the headlines Sept. 18. Dubbed Dieselgate, revelations that the world's largest automaker, known for its good environmental record, admitted to installing software to allow some 11 million diesel autos to function lawfully during emissions tests and unlawfully at other times, already has claimed the job of

SPECIAL EDITION: CROWDSOURCING

Continuing a tradition we began last year, the stories in this edition of PR News, with the exception of This Week in PR, are based on crowd-sourced suggestions from the PR News community. Generating more than 100 responses, suggestions ranged from social media and media relations to crisis communications and visual storytelling. As you'll see, we've credited those of you whose suggestions led to stories. Content stemming from some of the other fine suggestions we received will be included in future issues, again, with appropriate credit. Thank you for your suggestions and enjoy this week's issue.

VW chief Martin Winterkorn. The company likely is facing multi-billion dollar legal proceedings, not to mention falling sales and share prices. In addition to asking senior PR professionals how they'd advise VW, we also requested an interview with the company to learn about how it's handling PR and communica-

Continued on page 5

DIGITAL PR

BY CHARLENE MACIELAG, GLOBAL SERVICES MEDIA TEAM, FEDEX SERVICES

5 Ways FedEx's Media Team Delivers Its Brand Story on Instagram

[Editor's Note: Several crowdsource suggestions referred to tips and ideas for using social media to engage with consumers and tell brand stories. In an Instagram story in our Aug. 24 issue, Charlene Macielag, a member of FedEx's global services media team, described how FedEx is using Instagram, largely to post photos and content that consumers have supplied. "We're a firm believer that user-generated content (UGC) is the way to go," she told us then, adding, "We've nearly quadrupled our Instagram audience in the past nine months after switching to this strategy, going from 7K followers to 26K followers." For this current story, we asked Macielag for additional Instagram tips and insights.]

1. Share Behind-the-Scenes

Content: We love inserting the "FedEx story" wherever we can, especially on Instagram. Sharing facts about the company and mission has resonated with our fans. It puts what we do in perspective. Getting a package from point A to B seems easy, so we let fans know that FedEx sorts approximately 4 million packages daily. And that we sorted through 22+ million on our busiest day this past winter. By feeding these stats into our captions and videos, we help fans gain a better knowledge of our company and grow brand affinity.

Continued on page 6



PR Pros See Long Road Ahead for VW

tions during the crisis. Despite the demands of a global crisis, John Schilling, general manager, product communications for Volkswagen, responded to our request promptly (that's a PR lesson right there). We'll share his insider's PR story with you in the Oct. 5 edition of PR News.



Gene Grabowski, Partner, kglobal

Family Affair: Gene Grabowski has personal insight on this one—his dad sold cars for nearly 20 years. Accordingly, Grabowski says, "VW shouldn't forget about the dealers and salespeople...they are your best ambassadors to the public...make sure they are" taken care of, he says. What VW should avoid is for dealers and salespeople to "commiserate" with the public, saying things like 'We are as confused as you are about this...we don't know what went on or what's happening next.' Near the top of VW's priority list, he says, should be "an open line of communications" with dealers in Europe and the U.S.A. When dealers can tell consumers VW is fixing the problem, it will "get rid of the guilt." If dealers are unhappy, they "will undermine" VW.

Priorities: Speaking late last week, Grabowski counseled VW "within the next 48 hours" to craft "a clear, plausible, concise explanation" as to what happened. "There's no time for covering up or obfuscation...[and] don't put out the typical corporate response," he says. "Fear of the unknown is what keeps a crisis alive. Once there's an explanation, the healing can begin." Still, he concedes an investigation "will be painful...[the illegal act] must have included a lot of people not a few rogue employees; top people will have to be sacrificed." The automaker will be held "to a high standard" for a long time and it must be "transparent," telling "the world" what happened. Next, he urges VW to "announce" a large sum of money for consumers to get their cars made compliant. "It would be a great PR move...it would get the public's attention." Also: Find "a very articulate spokesman for the U.S. to go on talk and news shows...share the anguish and outline what the company is doing to fix things."

The Patient is Healthy: Grabowski sees VW emerging from this crisis since "it's not a safety issue or ineptitude...what kills car

companies is producing dangerous or poor-quality" vehicles. Still, reputation damage will be great and expensive in terms of advertising it will need to buy to repair its image, he says.



Andrew Gilman, President/CEO, CommCore

Whom Do You Trust? "In the end this all will come down to trust," Andy Gilman says. "If I don't trust the brand or the dealer, I can go someplace else" to buy a car, he says. His top priorities for VW: Decide what your top three messages are, decide what channels you want to distribute the messages on and to which audiences. Assemble your team and check back daily to see if you need to change course. "This can be done without having all the answers" about how the illegal maneuvers were made, Gilman adds. While Grabowski and others we interviewed feel VW is receiving very good legal counsel and has done a good PR job thus far by admitting guilt and having its U.S. CEO, Michael Horn, apologize publicly, Gilman says it's too early to grade VW's PR actions. He envisions the scandal "lasting a long time...a lot of lawyers will make a lot of money on this."



Laura Howe, VP, Media and Communities, Pearson North America

Short and Long Views: Like Gilman, in Laura Howe's viewpoint, timing is critical. "You have to take a long- and short-term view," she says. "The immediate issue will be off the front pages in a matter of days...but the investigations will be drawn out and take a long time...every time there's a lawsuit or investigation all this will be dredged up again...so you need to realize this also is a long-term issue and avoid getting bogged down in short-term, day-to-day things...It's not easy to do, but maybe [VW] can have someone isolated, viewing the issue from a long-term perspective."

Trust and Transparency: A VW driver herself, Howe agrees with Gilman and Grabowski regarding trust. VW "should create a beachhead of trust and transparency...that's what it will come down to...[and] consumers need to know what to do next."

Continued on page 6

PRNews' WRITING WORKSHOP

OCTOBER 26 | NEW YORK CITY

Find your PR writing voice and how you can apply it to brand messaging

What we'll cover:

- ✓ How to avoid getting deleted and write successful email pitches to journalists
- ✓ How to drive the agenda with powerful internal memos and emails
- ✓ The essential elements for compelling client pitches
- ✓ Establishing a voice and personality on social media
- ✓ Top techniques for becoming not just a presence but an influencer through your blog

Register: www.pnewsonline.com/writing-workshop2015

Questions? Contact Rachel Scharmann at rschermann@accessintel.com or 301-354-1713

26344



Peter LaMotte, SVP & Chair, Digital Communications Practice, Levick

Silver Lining? One part of Peter LaMotte's view is optimistic. "This will hurt VW's reputation and brand...[the unlawful acts are] not something the general public can easily understand...and [more important, the company] lied." Still, he sees a positive: VW, whose U.S. market stood at just 2% in January, down from 2.3% in January 2014, has a chance to remake itself in this country, he says. It can do so, he believes, by emphasizing trust and transparency. "They have to project the company as the new Volkswagen." But, like Howe above, LaMotte foresees this turnaround being a long-term project. "Look at BP," he says, "it's still rebuilding its reputation" by dedicating resources to cleaning "the Gulf [of Mexico]." The BP oil spill at Deepwater Horizon began in April 2010. [VW last week hired **Kirkland & Ellis LLP**, the law firm BP used to represent it during Deepwater cases.]

Multiple Platforms: LaMotte advises VW to engage in "basic communications, address your reputation...talk publicly about what you are doing to regain trust...show the public the

new VW and do so on multiple platforms...engage on social media and in person to address those who've criticized you on trust and work with allies to grow the brand" in the U.S.A. "Take the view that you are a new brand, a new product here in the U.S., we are not the company we once were," he says. Another must: Demonstrate you have a good product. "They need to put people in those cars; they need to show that despite what happened, theirs is a good product."

Go Public: While much of VW's time will be spent with regulators, LaMotte says reputation repair must be aimed at the general public and "it can't be done in a vacuum, you must engage," he says. "It will take more than a quick apology tour. This must be seen as a protracted battle to rebuild trust." ■

CONTACT: agilman@commcoreconsulting.com, laura.howe@pearson.com, gene.grabowski@kglobal.com, plamotte@levick.com

Thank you to Kimberly Foster, advertising and communications manager, Visit El Paso, for suggesting this topic.

FedEx Details Its UGC Rules for Instagram

2. Be Real: At FedEx, we show two things on Instagram: the "best of reality" and our business through the customer lens, using UGC. The former describes our process for selecting UGC photos. While we avoid images that reflect negatively on the brand, we understand authenticity is the most important standard. In that sense, we use the best of reality. We know it's more important for us to be true to reality than post perfect photos that aren't genuine to our audience.

3. Work With Affinity Groups and Sponsorships to Tag You in Their Instagram Posts: Make phone calls, work it into contracts—do whatever you can to make the most of these relationships. For companies with limited budgets, look at these groups as influencers. Being a B2B company affords you a great network of businesses you can ask to tag you in their photos. Perhaps you can supply them with information for a caption that helps educate their audiences on the importance of their business using your B2B brand.

PITFALLS TO AVOID

4. Quantity Over Quality: As with every platform, but especially with Instagram, which demands a higher level of aesthetic, it's all about quality over quantity. If you're low on content, restrain from posting an image just to post one. And avoid over-hashtaging and over-posting. Most brands, including FedEx, post 7-9 times/week. We believe posting once a day is best. In addition, hashtags are great to give extra con-

text to a post and provide a way for audiences beyond your community to find your posts; however, limit yourself to 4 hashtags/caption. At FedEx, we use 1-2 hashtags per post—and mostly for contextual reasons. If we feel the need to add more, we comment on the picture directly after posting it, under the original caption. This way, the additional hashtags are buried when other users comment on the picture.

5. Stay the Course: It's tempting to look at what other brands are doing and have a desire to emulate their actions—such as using filters or photos that obviously are Photoshopped, etc. We avoid using filters on our original content. They don't align with our visual identity or guidelines. It seems ironic to be on Instagram and defer on using a core set of its features, but it would be even more ironic if our company jumped on Instagram and began acting in a way that is foreign to our identity. ■

CONTACT: charlene.maciela@fedex.com

Thank you to Mitch Lubitz, East region media relations leader, Humana, and Ashleigh Whitby, interactive Web designer/producer, Georgia Department of Economic Development, for suggesting this story.