

HOSTING WINNERS

TRENDS IN SPORTS EVENT MANAGEMENT



APRIL 2010 Focus on

Digital Media

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Digital media: Building on best practices



Lars Lundov,
CEO, Sport Event Denmark



In line with today's fast-paced society, it has become quite common for sports event organisations to incorporate digital media in their overall business plan. Digital media, and the Internet in general, is able to provide the fastest, easiest, most cost-efficient way to distribute information and/or create awareness for events.

And still, we often hear sceptics in the sports world discussing the complexities related to digital media. What tools should be used? Will our key messages be understood using digital media channels? Can digital media eliminate the need for other communication platforms?



It is easy to understand why it can be overwhelming at times for event organisers to find the right digital media approach for their particular event. The question then becomes, as a sports event organisation, how can we be sure we are doing the right thing?

The first step is to understand some of the benefits of promoting a major sports event through digital media. Once the benefits are understood, it is easier to justify spending the time to create a personalised digital media strategy.

Key reasons to invest

Here are a few key reasons why we think it's important to invest in digital media for the promotion of sports events:

It provides an efficient means to reach an audience

Due to the advancements of technology, the fan reach for an event has grown beyond a single-event location. Digital media provides a global forum which allows organisers to connect with fans outside geographical boundaries. Depending on the target audience, digital messages can be adapted accordingly.

It provides multi-faceted communication channels

A key advantage to digital media is the interface it provides. Event organisers are able to post content on their various digital media outlets and provide a forum for candid reactions from users. Constantly monitoring feedback is important for several reasons. For example, as users share opinions about an event, the city can use this information to add more of what is demanded. If users are able to speak their minds (a natural part of being a fan), they begin to feel as though they are part of the event process.

It is effective in delivering key messages

When content is created, it becomes immediately available for viewing. Millions of people can access all information created by the event organiser within seconds. The way in which key messages are communicated should vary between digital media platforms. Key messages on social networking sites, for example, should cater towards a broader, less-informed audience. Conversely, specific key messages could be posted on the organisation's blog site, where the target audience is likely to visit.

It is an affordable means of marketing

Compared with traditional marketing, digital media is extremely cost effective. Most digital marketing platforms do not require a registration fee, allowing cities to access its target audience for free. However, like all marketing initiatives, companies must invest in employee training to ensure that digital media is being utilised successfully.

Customising the strategy

Certain digital media tools are best suited for different stages of the event – before, during and after. For example, a live feed keeps supporters informed of all event actions, which generally includes live scoring during the event. Blogs allow supporters the

opportunity to express their opinions, which can be monitored throughout all stages of the event.

Sport Event Denmark uses a variety of digital tools after the event to post new information or impressions from the event for the benefit of the fans and spectators. This approach stems from Sport Event Denmark's philosophy of operating in close cooperation with the event rights holder, the local organising committee and the host city, from the vital bidding process to the careful planning and marketing, until the event is successfully delivered.

If users are able to speak their minds (a natural part of being a fan), they begin to feel as though they are part of the event process.

With the continued advancement of technology, digital media tools are constantly changing and effective benchmarking practices can help organisations determine what tools are successful at each stage of the event. It is up to the sports organiser to absorb all of the available information and transform that knowledge into business! ■



Smart moves

Sport Event Denmark closely follows the new initiatives taken in the international world of sport. In this column, we give credit to the cities and sports organisations that are innovative, creative and aim to set new standards.

A smart move to support a good cause

Shocked by the coverage from the devastating earthquake in Haiti, tennis superstar **Roger Federer** arranged **the Hit for Haiti** charity event. In only 24 hours, he enlisted other top stars such as Rafael Nadal, Andy Rodick, Novac Djokovic, Serena Williams and Kim Clijsters. The tennis stars, giving up their last day of preparation before the Australian Open, played doubles exhibition matches in Melbourne Park and raised over 160,000 US dollars for the victims in Haiti.

A smart move to increase an event's coverage

The 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver made huge strides in terms of mobile coverage compared to the last winter games in 2006. Approximately 6'000 of the 23,000 total hours of new media coverage from Vancouver were mobile. There was also a 35 percent increase of broadcast television with equivalent hours of coverage on the internet. As Timo Lumme, the International Olympic Committee's Director of Television and Marketing, said, "It's all about trying to make it the best it can be, not only in terms of reach, but also in depth".

A smart move to develop sport education

The International Centre for Sports Studies (CIES) has launched the first-ever Sports Strategy Development Executive Programme for public sector officials working in the area of sports strategy and policy. During this unique one week executive programme, participants will learn from industry experts about practical strategies and tactics, network with colleagues from around the world, and meet international federations' leaders during field visits. The first course will take place in Switzerland, on May 16-22, 2010.

A smart move to attract youth

The Cypress Mountain venue of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver hosted an exciting debut of the **International Ski Federation's (FIS)** new Olympic discipline of **ski cross**. The rules are irresistibly simple – four skiers start at the top of a hill and the first to the bottom wins. It was fast, it looked great on television and there didn't appear to be any rule confusion. With the crowds at the venue and millions around the world watching the premier competition, ski cross certainly has made an impact in making the Olympic Games more youthful.

A smart move to innovate an event

The Danish organisers of the 2009 World Wrestling Championships, held in the City of Herning last September, received fantastic praise for their innovative approach to managing the event. International spectators responded with 99% positive responses to the new approach. The morning and afternoon fights were merged into one, the spectators were seated closer to the mats than usual to create a more intense and intimate atmosphere, and for the first time ever, smoke confetti and flames were introduced during the very exciting wrestling finals.

International Sailing makes waves online

Jerome Pels
ISAF Secretary General

ISAF's challenge is to effectively use our resources to engage existing and potential fans in a meaningful way, ensuring our sport remains at the cutting-edge of technology and accessible to as many people as possible.

Sailing is a technical sport where the competition takes place over a long span of time on a large and inaccessible field of play. Until recently, these features made the sport difficult and expensive to communicate to a wide audience. The digital revolution now presents us with an opportunity to realise the full entertainment potential of our sport and bring it to a whole new audience.

Two core aims for ISAF

ISAF's digital media strategy has two core aims: to improve the presentation and communication of the competition aspect of our sport and to engage with and expand sailing's fan base.

Let's look first at presentation and communication. Tracking systems now allow fans to follow the position of every boat during every second of competition. At the 2008 Volvo Youth Sailing ISAF World Championship in Aarhus, Denmark showcased the potential of this technology with fans from over 69 nations following the competition between the world's top young sailors. Following on from this event's success, the Danish Sailing Association promoted tracking at seven key Danish events in 2009 which combined resulted in over 260,000 viewing sessions averaging 15 minutes (i.e. a total of over 65,000 viewing hours).

At the Perth 2011 ISAF Sailing World Championships – which will bring together approximately 1,350 sailors from 80 nations – the organisers will be providing real-time results and tracking of racing throughout the entire championships with 3D tracking to complement the television footage of the decisive



Medal Races. With this technology, the audience member is now sitting behind the camera lens directing the action according to his preferences.

Moving onto audience engagement. Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter now mean the flow of information between sport and fan has become much more of a two-way exchange. This has been fantastic for us as we have been able to actively exchange and, in turn, receive direct feedback from our audience in a way that simply wasn't possible before. In particular, we've been able to engage the youth audience via YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Wordpress sites for our Youth World Championship – all integrated into the main championship website at www.isafyouthworlds.com.

A key challenge has been to find out what works best for what audience. For example, our Youth World Championship and sail development programme have built up a large Facebook following, but for our elite ISAF Sailing World Cup event, the videos, photos and news on our website remain the main audience drivers.

Digital exploration continues

ISAF wants to promote the accessibility of the sport and make the information as widely available as possible. Our Technology Working Party has been working on a set of definitions - effectively an online language - so sailing events and organisations around the world can share information and results in a commonly understood format. ■



“The digital revolution now presents us with an opportunity to realise the full entertainment potential of our sport and bring it to a whole new audience”



Triathlon takes on digital media in stride

Marisol Casado

ITU President and IOC Member

Providing high-quality digital media for fans, media, broadcast partners and athletes has been a major focus of the International Triathlon Union (ITU) for over a decade. It has also been crucial to the sport's meteoric growth in recent years. Creating a ubiquitous media strategy to syndicate content across TV, internet and mobile devices has been important to provide compelling and relevant content for our partners and increase participation and interest in triathlon.

Providing easy-to-access content ensures that ITU's messaging of a balanced, active lifestyle, combined with compelling sporting content, can be accessed across all mediums. This strategy also ensures that key ITU and stakeholder messages are delivered to as wide an audience as possible.

A variety of applications

ITU's core TV programming is designed to drive an engaged audience to a wide selection of multimedia assets and resources on ITU's website.

All of the ITU World Championship Series events are available to stream live during the race free-of-charge and are also available on-demand to premium subscribers 20 minutes after the race finishes (triathlon.org/tv). On top of this, ITU produces a 52-minute magazine show for every major event, which is available to subscribers two days after each race. Podcasts highlighting each major event are instantly available for download. Additionally, a mobile version of triathlon.org can also be accessed instantly from most mobile devices.

This comprehensive multimedia package ensures that fans can access ITU content on-the-move, where the consumer can view content on their own schedule.

Customised packages

For broadcast media, ITU offers broadcast-quality news highlights delivered digitally, immediately after a race's conclusion. Custom footage can be tailored

for each channel to supplement their broadcasts, which negates the need for multiple satellite bookings and ensures that last-minute requests can be met. Custom online video packages are provided to major broadcast partners, such as BBC, after each race for inclusion on the channel's website to satisfy the need for rapidly available race highlights and behind the scenes action not broadcasted on the main network. Multimedia highlight packages are also syndicated to major trade websites, ensuring that premium footage is instantly available to an eager consumer base.

Added advantages

The ITU provides an online media centre for all registered press, providing access to high-resolution photos, audio grabs, press releases and race statistics. Press may also access detailed athlete profiles and up-to-date world rankings, live timing and statistics on the media site. The media centre ensures that the ITU can meet the needs of the International press 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Finally, as the landscape of digital media continues to evolve, the ITU has adapted its digital media strategy in recent years to include social networking (Facebook and Twitter) and mobile capability. Social networking has allowed ITU to engage and interact with a swiftly growing generation of users, who remain continuously connected to the triathlon world. ■



“This comprehensive multimedia package ensures that fans can access ITU content on-the-move, where the consumer can view content on their own schedule”



Are international sports organisations **seizing digital opportunities?**

New opportunities abound as a result of the blossoming digital media environment – but are international sports organisations keeping up? Hosting Winners speaks with Josh Koster, Managing Partner of Chong+Koster, a US based digital media firm and Pierre Germeau, Managing Director of Wwwaka and a digital sports media consultant, to get their view on where sports organisations stand in the digital arena.



JOSH KOSTER
Managing Partner
Chong+Koster



High profile industries and professional sports organisations seem to be ahead of the curve when it comes to generating good digital content. What challenges must international sports organisations overcome to reach this level?

JOSH KOSTER

There are three primary factors that I've seen. Some of the problem is systemic, as international organisations often have to sign away the broadcast rights to their best events. This is definitely the smallest and least relevant factor. The bigger problem is an industry-wide resistance to change. Thankfully, all of the well-run organisations seem to be realizing that investing in digital is no longer an option; that it's the most visible part of their brand whether or not they choose to participate in their digital presence.

Finally, and this is the big one – there's been a lack of credible vendors. For whatever reason, most sports organisations turn to local vendors first who are often ill-equipped to do anything but deliver what the client is asking for – which is usually pretty far from what they actually need. Good digital comes from management consulting relationship. Not only do you have to build websites, and launch media campaigns – but you have to completely change how the organisation does business to ensure they can keep up with the medium.

PIERRE GERMEAU

The situation in the sport industry is far from being uniform, as some sports entities are early adopters in the digital environment, while others are far behind the curve. Take the IOC, for example. The IOC developed a Facebook community of over 14 million fans for the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games in just a few, short weeks. The America's Cup organisers have also shown a digital-oriented attitude by providing a live broadcast of races, free-of-charge, to more than 300'000 users, including YouTube. It is quite obvious that these organisations have successfully taken advantage of digital media.

However, it is true that some of the most important sport bodies seem slightly behind and/or absent from the digital media arena. One could attribute their absence to the organisation's resistance to change and, to a certain level, conservatism. However, it is my belief that it is primarily caused by the desire to maintain a high level of control on the brand linked to their discipline(s), which is, at times, problematic when entering the realm of digital media.



PIERRE GERMEAU
Managing Director of
Wwwaka





With the rising costs of hosting sports events is digital media really something event organisers should invest in?

JOSH KOSTER

Absolutely. Just look at the for-profit sectors that move faster and make decisions based on return on investment. When the recession hit, advertising and marketing spending dropped across the board – except digital. It spiked because the ROI is so staggering when done right. It baffles me that clients would even consider buying a billboard without first testing which imagery and copy perform best by running the concepts as online ads and letting the data decide.

These days your brand is what people find when they Google you – choosing not to embrace digital is the same as choosing not to have any say in your own brand.

I would argue that the real question is: What's the point of spending money to host an event if you're not going to invest in maximising the impact of the event on your city or country brand?

PIERRE GERMEAU

Digital media is the ideal medium to offer vast exposure and to increase awareness at limited investments. Thanks to new digital media channels, the same piece of content (text, picture or video) can be distributed to a wider range of audiences and reach isolated communities who weren't able to access the event in the past.

Ten years ago, interested audiences didn't have the opportunity to access footage or stream live video from any event outside of the top ten sports events in the world. It was literally impossible because general media rights were not sold to broadcasters at the time. Digital media also offers a unique user experience, simply by providing access to information regardless of location (people on the move, isolated expatriate communities who couldn't access their favourite game on television, etc).

Limited investments in new media tools can also be very appealing to event organisers. It provides an interactive layer to any sports event and lets the audience 'inside' the sport they love. ■



For the complete list of events
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Events Schedule

Below is a selection of events in Denmark covering the period until the next edition of "Hosting Winners".

April

11-18 IIHF World U18 Championship 2010
 Division 1 (icehockey)
Herning

May

7-8 UCI BMX Supercross World Cup 2010
Copenhagen

22-23 European Rugby Championships
 qualification tournament
Odense

June

22-27 Cph Pro 2010 (skateboard)
Copenhagen

July

1-8 IOF World junior orienteering
 Championships 2010
Aalborg

6-10 European Golf Championships 2010,
 girls
Aalborg

10-16 UEG Eurogym 2010 (gymnastics)
Odense

25-6.08 505 World Championship 2010
 (yachting)
Aarhus

29-30 World Cup team speedway 2010
Vojens/Haderslev

31-8.08 e-Boks Danish Open WTA Tour 2010
Farum

August

3-10 Danish Open Match Race 2010
Gentofte, Copenhagen

4-10 Youth European Dinghy Championship
 2010 (yachting)
Aarhus

15 Challenge Copenhagen 2010
 (ironman, triathlon)
Copenhagen

20-4.09 World Championships RS-X-class 2010
Kerteminde

September

4-5 FIM Sidecar Motocross World
 Championship & UEM EM QUAD and
 International ladyclass 2010
Slagelse

Athletes' Corner



Experience Vancouver 2010 direct from the athletes

The Vancouver 2010 Olympics showcased the power of digital media as athletes got online to 'tweet' about their experiences. The practically unlimited access to the Internet – compared to the experience in Beijing – combined with the rise of social networking platforms and use of mobile phones to stay connected allowed fans to follow their favourite athletes in real time. This sets new standards and creates new platforms from which fans can enjoy their favourite sports events.

Here is what some of the athletes had to say on Twitter:

Liz Stephen, Cross Country Skier, American

@Lizstephen: Would you like some deodorant, a rice krispie treat, or perhaps you just need a hug? Imagine anything you need and the athlete village has it

Apolo Ohno, Short Track Speed Skater, American

@ApoloOhno: Just got back from the gym. Stretching, meditating, Tweeting? Wait, what? Ok. Back to getting my mind right.

Hayley Wickenheiser, Ice Hockey, Canadian

@wick_22: Thank you Canada and thank you Vancouver!!! The best Olympics ever! I think these games will be remembered as the games that inspired a nation to "believe" we can do anything.

Akset Lund Svindal, Alpine Skier, Norway

@akselsvindal: Downhill SILVER. The feeling of coming down and be leading was unreal. Olympics rock!!

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