



Public Relations Training for Young People to Support the 2007 Centenary Celebrations

PROMISING PRACTICES

The Centenary of Scouting in 2007 offers a unique opportunity to radically improve the external image of Scouting, by communicating the benefits and values of Scouting to people, both young and old, around the world.



Young people support Scouting by developing their Public Relations and communication skills

Faced with the challenge of how to use 2007 to improve press coverage for Scouting in the United Kingdom, a joint Public Relations (PR) initiative was set up in 2003 between The Scout Association and Scouting 2007. The aim is to dramatically increase the number and quality of press reports related to Scouting in the UK. Young people trained in all aspects of public relations are essential to the success of this initiative.

The Results

In April 2004, a weekend PR Training course for 24 young people aged between 15 and 25 was held at Gilwell Park in the UK. The course was based on professional PR training, and included ideas and speakers from Scouting, other charities and the business world.

During the weekend, the young people learnt about the theory and challenges of effective media activity. More importantly, they then took part in a series of practice TV, radio and press interviews – followed by the opportunity to replay their interviews on video and receive peer feedback.

"As the weekend progressed, my confidence in being a spokesperson for Scouting grew after each activity", commented one young person after the . And "Just to say thank you for a fantastic weekend. It was full of information and really motivating – now we feel ready to promote what we are doing and tell everybody how great 2007 and beyond will be !!", said another.

The Reasons

The project team agreed that pro-active and successful PR for Scouting and 2007 would be dependent on the following four factors:

- Press releases that contain a small number of important, clearly targeted key messages.
- Messages that are delivered consistently by effective team of trained people.
- Stories which are interesting and newsworthy to hook the media.
- Positive and pro-active relationships built with the journalists.



Centenary of Scouting 2007

Strategic Priority 7

Scouting's Profile – strengthening communications, partnerships and resources



The World Organization of the Scout Movement

A strategic decision was made early on to use young people under 25 years of age as the face and voice of Scouting and 2007 to the media. The original reason was to increase youth involvement in key areas of Scouting's Centenary, in line with Strategic Priority 1.

However, other compelling reasons for using young people quickly emerged:

- Scouting is about young people, and using young spokespeople reinforces this message – especially to the UK media which often has an old-fashioned perception of Scouting.
- Young spokespeople bring enthusiasm and their own personal experience to media interviews – for example, they can relate the future World Scout Jamboree in 2007 to their experiences of the World Scout Jamborees in Thailand or Chile.
- The use of young spokespeople provides a practical demonstration of the message that Scouting develops young people.

The Methods

Recruiting the Young Spokespeople

Young spokespeople were recruited through the existing network of local Scouting appointments who support all aspects of 2007 around the UK. Many of the young spokespeople had been members of the Jamboree contingents to Thailand or Chile – others had been on expeditions or community development projects abroad.

And all of them had in common an enthusiasm for Scouting and a strong desire to tell others about it.

Staffing the PR Training Course

The PR Training Course used four main groups of staff:

- Tutors, since the course was tutor based to encourage learning.

- Presenters, all with a background of PR both inside and outside Scouting.
- Interview staff, to play the role of the journalists.
- Technical staff to man the TV cameras and recording equipment.



Public Relations training in a Scout setting

The team included professional staff from The Scout Association, Scouting 2007, and the World Scout Bureau, plus Scouting volunteers who were involved in PR in their professional life.

And true to the theme of the course, many of the staff were under 30 – including the course leader.

Our Learning

This was an experimental course – which was far more successful than we had ever imagined.

In retrospect, there were some key reasons for this:

- Young people understand PR concepts very easily.
- PR Training works well with young spokespeople.
- Enthusiasm and practical experience are key to delivering good Scouting press interviews.

- Young people take on board feedback easily and use it to try to improve.

Our Future Plans

Of course, delivering PR Training to Young Spokespeople is only the start and during the end of course review with the participants, three next steps emerged:

- *"Give us the opportunities to use our new PR skills by doing real TV, radio and press interviews".*
- *"Help us to share our practical PR experiences with each other"*
- *"Run this PR course again for a wider group of young spokespeople".*

Detailed plans are now being developed for an initial set of PR launches around the UK during the summer of 2004, focused on EuroJam, the European Jamboree that will take place in 2005.

The real measure of the success of the PR Training course will of course be the quality and quantity of media coverage generated by these young people between now and 2007.

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