

Public Relations on a Shoestring

Facilitated by Christophe Ginisty, Former President of IPRA - International Public Relations Association

Mr. Ginisty, former President of the International Public Relations Association, gave a humorous, inspiring, and informative workshop on making the most of a small budget to maximize associations' public relations. He highlights that the traditional ways of doing things (such as top-down campaigns, only using statements, and not engaging with followers or those who are in your community) are flawed, costly, and less likely to succeed.

Mr. Ginisty first presented two key learnings for the audience. First, there is nothing more important than a great idea; without one, there cannot be the first step to success. Second, in the 'Digital Era', ideas can spread massively, beyond borders. He then addresses a critical notion: *communication is about creating a movement, and creating a call to action.*

Associations often face limited budgets, and it is important to know how to create a movement with smaller amounts of money. For this, Mr. Ginisty provided eight key building blocks that will help drive the success of a campaign:

1. People online don't share information; rather, they share *emotions*. It is important to connect your 'brand' to an emotion, which helps people 'feel' your message.
2. It is important that people feel personally concerned about your campaign. Invite the audience to feel concerned, help them want to get involved.
3. Mr. Ginisty stated that people are aware that they spend too much time online. Challenge the audience's online habits, talk about their networks, and gauge a strong reaction.
4. Influencers still play very important roles. Find ambassadors who will help spread your message; asking key influencers to spread your message only costs a phone call.
5. The concept of 'gamification' entertains the audience and encourages them to participate in your campaign. Creating a game also makes it fun for your followers to actively engage and promote your message to others.
6. Some brands immediately capture attention: rely on famous, or bigger, brands to get your message out. Your cause benefits from being seen alongside a larger brand.
7. People love controversy: use your opponents' mistakes to make your voice heard. (However: do not stir up trouble just for the sake of attention! Negative attention will distract from your message.)
8. People like to detect what's 'wrong' with them. Engage and communicate with your audience to reflect on the way they think/act/behave. Reflection will help the audience spread your message if they believe it will help fix a problem.

In order to fully understand the previous building blocks for success, Mr. Ginisty showed a variety of clips from successful campaigns. These included Greenpeace, Lufthansa, and a longer video (which demonstrated block 8), which featured refugees and encouraged reflection over the refugee crisis. Mr. Ginisty informed the audience that these videos all utilized similar techniques in triggering emotions, encouraging participation, used influencers and larger brands for success, and caused the audience to feel concerned in some way.

However, it is equally important to use a 'recipe for success' in the Digital Era in tandem with the previous building blocks in order to make the most of your campaign. Mr. Ginisty highlighted the importance of this recipe for use online, especially with campaigns on social media; as he stated, *'Hashtags are free'*.

Mr. Ginisty's recipe for success includes having the courage to stand alone and start an idea, demonstrate how to follow and nurture your followers, creating the movement, and to also follow others and encourage your audience to participate.

However, success is not always guaranteed. Yet, Mr. Ginisty provided food-for-thought with his last take-away lesson: *it is not the idea alone that will bring success, but rather the idea will generate a movement.* In other words, the idea alone is not enough; there must be active participation, conversation, and action to help your campaign gain momentum. However, this can be done for little money, especially through social media and digital tools.