
EYE-CATCHING HEADLINE HERE

BY ROBERTA THOMSON
BRUNSWICK, NEW YORK

Corporate communications doesn't have to be serious. Sometimes being inventive, humorous and surprising is the way to go

An informative, carefully crafted press release is no longer enough. More than ever, successful corporate communications is about grabbing the attention of your audience. Even the most sophisticated companies must now be more enterprising – and sometimes fleet-footed – in the ways that they engage.

Cupcakegate

Last December, as an annual holiday gesture, telecoms group AT&T distributed hundreds of luxurious cupcakes to employees of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), as well as other federal agencies and a few journalists, in Washington, DC. The next day, Public Knowledge, a consumer advocacy group, leaked the cupcake distribution list – a mostly tongue-in-cheek move that also had a point to make about lobbying a day after an important FCC internet ruling. In a blog entitled “Cupcakegate,” Robert Quinn, an AT&T public policy executive, observed, “Inexplicably, Public Knowledge adopted an anti-cupcake agenda. Perhaps Public Knowledge is just upset that we didn't send any to them. Well consider it done. They're on the way.” Art Brodsky, Public Knowledge's Communications Director, had to acknowledge that “[we] did get some cupcakes and they were delicious (although there was considerable discussion whether they were better than Hello Cupcakes of Dupont Circle).” Even the usually poker-faced FCC rose to the occasion, proclaiming: “We're pro open internet and pro-cupcake.”

Like, read this

There is still plenty of room for creativity in the humble press release. “The World's Most Successful Media Moguls Align with Upstart Media Empire with the Goal of ‘Total World Domination,’” was the title of a press release from *Vice*, a fast-growing New York-based media business geared toward hip youth, written with the intention both of appealing to its core demographic as well as grabbing notice from financial editors. It did the trick. As *The New York Times* business column noted, “While *DealBook* receives dozens of press releases a day, this one jumped out at us.” Similarly, an online coupon company intrigued its target audience with the cleverly titled “Groupon Raises, Like, a Billion Dollars.” As the *Financial News* felt compelled to point out, “This is not a typo, but the exact title of a press release by the online coupon provider that has sparked debate...” That debate – about whether it was, like, the largest-ever venture funding for a private company – was, no doubt, a bonus for Groupon in its efforts to garner notice.

Words of pure awesomeness

Mitch Delaplane of Chicago-based PitchPoint Public Relations, took surreal irony a step further with his press release via PR Newswire, entitled, “The Most Amazing Press Release Ever Written.” As *The Huffington Post* observed admiringly, “Delaplane has written a press release that exists exclusively to call attention to its own greatness.” With head-spinning irony,



Delaplane writes at one point, “I'm quoting myself again because the first quote didn't do it justice. If you're still reading this news release, then you know what I'm talking about when I say it's something special. In fact, it's 483 words of pure awesomeness.”

Taking Hef's privates private

Not many business chiefs are responsible for their own tweets, and not many have more than 600,000 followers on Twitter. Still fewer can claim adult entertainment stars and Paris Hilton among their followers. One who can is Hugh Hefner, Chief Creative Officer and legendary founder of Playboy Enterprises. Having built a myriad following, Hef keeps his key audiences abreast by tweeting about anything from closing the take-private deal, to the launch of the iPad version of Playboy Magazine, to the latest antics at the Playboy Mansion. The size of his following is testament to the fact that he is keeping them informed and entertained. As the Twitter world grows exponentially, the tweets of Hef and the bunnies are retweeted many times over, as is the famous bowtied Bunny logo. Even some of the more corporate tweets are irresistible to some retweeters, such as the one about the take-private deal entitled: “Hef's taking Playboy's Privates Private.” 🐰

Roberta Thomson is a Director in Brunswick's New York office. She is a qualified chartered accountant and specializes in financial communications.