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Where in the World? Tips for International PR

by smpsboston

Today's post is courtesy of Michele Spiewak, an account manager at Rhino Public Relations. Questions or comments? E-mail her at Michele@rhinopr.com or visit www.rhinopr.com.



Like Carmen Sandiego and her worldly pursuits, executing public relations on an international level takes strategy, advanced planning, and a few local connections. If you've landed a project abroad, your firm can garner publicity – both here and in the project's locale.

When Cambridge-based Acentech, a multi-disciplinary acoustics, audiovisual systems design, and vibration consulting firm, started work on the Sala Sinfonica Pablo Casals, a premier symphony hall project in San Juan, Puerto Rico, the firm knew that this unique project needed special PR attention. As the project progressed toward completion, Acentech asked Rhino PR, its agency of record, to advise on securing coverage for this locally prominent project. Through professional connections, Rhino PR identified a local public relations professional in San Juan, and the close coordination between her and Rhino PR resulted in positive coverage for Acentech and the project. Here are a few lessons we learned about publicizing a project abroad:

- **It's challenging to do PR in another country – unless you have a local office. Public relations is not the same in every country.** The media sometimes works differently, just as the way of doing business can vary by country. There are nuances in the business environment that we wouldn't necessarily know about, and cultural differences need to be respected. Of course, language barriers can be an issue as well. The distance and time zones also create obstacles to adequately reaching the media.

- **Hire a local PR person with connections who can be your eyes and ears on the ground.** Prior to the project's completion, identify a local PR professional who is plugged into their local media and business environment, yet willing to work with a U.S.-based PR agency on the overall PR strategy. English fluency is a must to reduce misunderstandings. If your project is politically sensitive, choose someone with insight into the political scene, or better yet, political connections. Nothing will derail your PR efforts faster than an uncooperative government official.
- **International PR doesn't have to break the bank.** Engage the local PR person to work on a project basis – hopefully in tandem with your own U.S.-based PR agency. A few months of PR work around the project's completion is a wise investment to garner local coverage and name recognition for your firm.
- **Be consistent with your messaging and PR materials.** The style of press releases can vary by country, but the content should be consistent with your company's branding and project messaging. Press releases, project sheets, and marketing materials should be drafted here and translated by your local PR person for their own use and distribution. This way, you control the messaging and your local PR person is responsible for the translation.

With some strategic planning and foresight, securing coverage on a global project doesn't have to be a detective game. Finding the right PR partner abroad to be your eyes and ears on the ground will give you the advantage.