

EAT OUR

WAKE

MEDIA CASE STUDY

Bright House Clearwater
Super Boat
National Championship
& Seafood Festival
Clearwater, Florida;
October 2-4, 2009



["Eat Our Wake" is taken from a popular water-sport racing term "Eat My Wake" meaning whoever is in the lead is creating such a huge track of waves left by the boat or other object moving through the water that the others have to "eat it". The very first press release written for this event was titled "Eat My Wake" which was picked up by USA Today.com and several other media outlets.]

In This Case Study,

JoTo PR will attempt to portray the media involvement that was an integral part of the event's success. Of course, there were many partners involved that helped create the synergy that contributed to the overall success of the event, which was a true community grass-roots effort... but for this particular case study, we will show the steps that were taken that helped create the media frenzy and ultimately their endorsement that this inaugural event was, as quoted by the St. Pete Times, a "model for success in tough economic times."

PRESENTING SPONSOR:

Bright House Networks

SITUATION:

There were only 6 weeks to promote the event. On August 20th, JoTo PR was asked to help with some "local PR" for the event. The week of the press conference and start of the festival was only 6 weeks away. In an event of this nature, 3 months is the minimum amount of time that should be allowed for proper promotion and PR. The purpose of this event was to bring economic dollars to the area at a lull time of year.

CRUCIAL FACTOR:

In order for the event to be sanctioned as a success and acquire sponsor dollars for following years, it was quickly apparent that there had to be a ton of media coverage.

CHALLENGE:

The challenge was getting media buy-in during college football season. College football is a religion in the South. The attention on a "new" sport to an area would be difficult to convince major broadcasting stations to cover over their typical football staple.

OPPORTUNITIES:

The offshore power boat sport could bring a boost of economic dollars into the area where tourism is typically slow this time of year. If this proved out, then the event could possibly become a mainstay and generate millions of dollars to the tourism economy year after year.

The race organizers had excellent relations within the business community and ties into the local government, leveraging joint-venture opportunities from both public and private sectors without using city tax dollars. By bringing together Community Partners like the Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Coastguard, the Pinellas County Sherriff's Department and public transportation capability of the Jolley Trolley, local area businesses could partner together to bring their special expertise to the table and make this a success for all.

HOW THE MEDIA ISSUES WERE OVERCOME:

The media strategy had to overcome the challenges of too little time and too little attention from sports broadcasters. What we had to do was put more attention on the business aspect of the event that would weigh heavily on current news angles of the economy and what businesses and groups were doing despite the downturn.

RESEARCH:

JoTo PR identified the Opinion Leaders in the community as well as any potential media stories that could present obstacles to the event's success. Current news angles were researched as well as what articles journalists were interested in at the present time. People and groups that could help support the event were noted and angles of how to utilize their involvement in the media coverage was mapped out. We planned out how to utilize any controversy that could be brought up to support the event. This initial research part was crucial to determine any possible barriers that could arise in order to have planned handlings already in place ready to execute if needed.

From this research, an overall strategy was put together to determine the entire flow of actions to take on the publicity, Public Relations and social media front with a time table planned out on a calendar, scheduled out like clockwork.

THE 2ND PHASE OF THE CAMPAIGN WAS MEDIA RELATIONS:

The media outlets and media individuals in the area were identified and categorized as to the most important to the least important. Even though we were familiar the local media market, we did this anyway, just as we do in every media market we work with nationwide.

The media is a specific target market, with its own demographics, likes and dislikes. We had to find out which media outlets like to play ball and which ones like to play hard ball as well as determining what print journalists and broadcast journalists will cover, based on their journalist portfolios, past coverage and angles they are bent toward. Once all of this was determined, stories were pitched for the event.

- **News release and media alert strategy** was developed to tell a story leading up to the event and get as much coverage as possible before the event. Media respond to certain types of communications/angles so this strategy was based on what was currently being printed and broadcasted in the news at the present time. Determining this upfront was another key factor in ensuring the media took this event seriously and gave us the coverage that we wanted.
- **News releases** were written up front in a series and distributed on a time table to strategic national news outlets and the entire Florida media database (print, TV and radio). In addition, JoTo PR had the task of publishing these news releases via broad-scale distribution services and other key online ancillary news outlets in order to dominate the online scene.
- **Bright House Networks** was THE presenting sponsor in this event, with a designated 1200 TV spots, but bearing out to be over 6500 TV spots, promoting the races. The importance of dominating the online scene was to ensure that if people could not remember the website address after seeing the commercial, they would have no difficulty finding the Clearwater Super Boat races no matter what search terms they used online.

- **Media Alerts** were written ahead of time regarding traffic slows, parking, etc. in order to get local news bites broadcasted during the festival weekend. The media feel it is their duty to warn the public of “potential problems”, so ensuring these potential problems were communicated on the offense (and not the defense) was also critical in getting more support from the media on the stories that we wanted them to cover. These were distributed in a scheduled time table as well.
- **In addition to the marketing collateral** being handled by the marketing partner, CCM, who did an incredible job on design, printing and printing, they created an email design with the event particulars.
- **Emails were blasted out** to JoTo PR’s database and distributed to all partners, sponsors, hotel partners, etc. to be distributed to their databases as well. The intention here was total grass-roots marketing - they tell another, and they tell another and they tell another, etc. etc. This portion tied in well with the Social Media portion of the PR campaign. Once the initial email blast went out, a schedule of regular email promotions to the above lists were created and executed, with instructions to forward along to family and friends for viral marketing.
- **Communication and coordination** lines were set up by the race organizers with all the players in the event. A fast response time from all parties was vital. A key factor in all partners being able to wear their hats and act as professionals in their particular sectors was the race organizers attitude to NOT micro-manage.
- **The media was pitched** from the angle that would result in excellent media coverage. From our research and initial response from the media, the go-button was the economic boost - not the boats, not the teams, but the contribution to boosting the “slow time of year” in the tourism industry. Once this was determined, this was tromped on hard, recycled and reused in every media story that was pitched.
- **A social media strategy** was developed that aligned with the overall PR strategy for the event. Any type of offshore racing, boating, power boats, races, poker runs, anything to do with water, water groups, etc., etc. were found and connected with. The thing people do not know about social media is that there are as many demographics in social media as there are in the “real world.” Finding social network sites and groups and connecting up to them was vital. Social media profiles were established, i.e., Facebook Fan Page, our Blog and Twitter, etc.
- **Once the social media** profiles were set up they were maintained on a daily basis. Think of word-of-mouth on steroids. That is the power of social media if used right. It is like a casual conversation, but online.
The news media is also on social media these days which made for even more coverage and more followers. Social Media was heavily utilized to ensure that groups were sought after that had strong emotional ties to boating. Boaters came out of the woodwork, asking for spectator coordinates, where to buy merchandise and for more information about the race.
- **Web Designs** by Bob, who created the website, made immediate website postings for each media story that was gotten. Every story, press release, news clip, etc. found was immediately forwarded to Bob who would then post the event coverage on the website press page in chronological order from bottom to top. This created more credibility for the event, not only to spectators, but also to the media who went searching to determine if

there was a story to be told. More media = more media - more media...never less. The Press Page on the website told the initial story of how the Super Boat races came to Clearwater and the media links expanded the story day after day leading up to and through the event.

- **Prospects for media interviews** were located. The people that needed to be available to the media had to include the race teams, VIPs, sponsors, government officials and charities. JoTo PR contacted all parties involved and a press conference with media stunts, i.e. rides on the boat(s), was set up. All the key players were invited: community leaders, charities, City and County Officials, boat racers, etc. The stunts were invaluable to getting more media support.
- **Exclusives stories** and interviews were offered to certain media stations to ensure coverage the entire weekend... as well as giving stations "first dibs" on different aspects of the race. Again, this was to ensure coverage happened all weekend.
- **A shot list of photos** to be taken was created and distributed to photographers to ensure that the all points of the event, celebs, boats, etc. were portrayed. Photos were taken before, during and after via multiple photographers and posted online with credits given to the various professionals. This created a plethora of photographs that could be used for press packs, event promotion in the future, media releases and the like. Allowing professionals the ability to contribute to an event like this and possibly gain more business created even more good will, another PR tactic.
- **A shot list of online videos** was created and distributed to all videographers to ensure all points of the events, celebs, boats, etc. are portrayed. The videos were done in a "user-generated format" in order to be able to be posted immediately on social media and on the blog.

From our own market research on events of this nature, there is a real need for fans to feel like they are "up close and personal." Even though high-quality videos have lots of appeal, nothing creates more fanfare than raw, user-generate content on social media. These were shot and posted throughout the weekend on all social media sites including JoTo PR's blog and social media sites.

- **Live radio broadcast, talent and PA system** for race day was a necessity. We were told repeatedly that a boat race without radio commentary was a flop, so securing radio broadcast was a necessity. Radio spots were written to acknowledge the sponsors, partners, hotel partners, etc.
- **The media was monitored constantly** and then any found and posted online. To ensure that the clearwatersuperboat.com website was continuously updated in real-time, all new media articles and clips were updated in the website and throughout all social media channels. This served to make not only the event more widely received by the public and fans, but also allowed us to continue to see what angles were most important to the media so that more stories could be pitched throughout the event for the greatest possible coverage.
- **A running chronological story** was posted about the event in "real-time" on the JoTo PR blog, replete with pictures from the photographers, videos and press. This blog automatically posted to all social media sites and kept the various fans involved.

NOTE: The key buy-in for the media was that none were excluded. Press credentials were made as simple as possible. Even though the large publications have larger subscriptions, the truth, in this day and age, is that the larger publications are downsizing, cutting staff and making existing staff wear multiple hats. This is a nightmare for coverage if you depend on any one publication or broadcast station.

Our experience and recommendation is to not limit an event like this to one large media partner as they will eliminate within their sponsorship contract the ability for smaller publications to cover their sponsored events.

The biggest part in getting all the coverage we did, was not only researching and determining what the media would cover, but also not cutting any media outlet out, no matter how small.

The goodwill created by this gesture to the media was overwhelming. The reason? We helped increase their own newsworthiness which then increases the number of advertisers for them in the future. In essence, we communicated to their bottom line.

Statistics

At the time of this early writing, over 40 media outlets carried the Super Boat story, sometimes with multiple media pieces, including:

- USAToday.com
- Tampa Bay Newspapers
- Bay News 9
- MSN Money
- Clearwater Gazette
- Bright House Sports Network
- St. Petersburg Times
- Speed Style Magazine
- Sand Key Sun
- TBO.com
- Tree Hugger: A Discovery Channel Company
- The Beach Scene
- TampaBay.com
- 10 Connects
- Channel 8
- Maddux Press
- Fox 13
- WFLA radio

Online “organic” Links: These are non-paid links generated by Social Media and Traditional Media that is online. Different search terms brought up different links, but on average approximately 1000 links would show for each different search term used regarding the Clearwater Super Boat Races. These links include press release outlets; online publications; bloggers; Power Boat, Super Boat and Off Shore Racing groups, social media forums and chat sites.

Social Media followers & fans: 3100-plus

Online video views: 600-plus

Website: Below you can see the hits per day leading up to the Boat Races.

- Sep 25 - 387
- Sep 26 - 326
- Sep 27 - 462
- Sep 28 - 774
- Sep 29 - 1008
- Sep 30 - 961
- Oct 1 - 1389
- Oct 2 - 2508
- Oct 3 - 2709
- Oct 4 - 2245

Number of People & Boats: There was an estimated total over the entire weekend of about 60,000 people.

- Race Village – 8500 people over 3 days
- Sat & Sun on water: about 3000 boats with an average of 10 people on each boat
- Sat on Pier 60 for concert & fireworks: about 5000 people
- Sunday, Race Day on Beach: about 12,000 bodies on the beach
- Sunday, Race Day on Pier 60: about 3,000 bodies on Pier 60
- Condos, Homes & Restaurants over the entire weekend – about 6000 people

Economic Impact Estimations: Approximately \$6 million dollars was generated.⁽¹⁾

- Over 2,500 boats on Saturday and Sunday purchased more than \$1million in fuel.
- Race teams purchased over \$100,000 in fuel.
- 25,000 plus people on boats over Saturday and Sunday, marinas ran out of fuel, food and beverages.
- Many local stores ran out of party/picnic foods and beverages.
- Business on the beach that weekend was up 40% over the prior year.
- Hotels reported business for them from 10-30%, some were sold out.
- The beach and downtown Coachman Park area were “alive” during a normal “dead period” for tourists!

(1) Official statistics have not come in from the Petersburg/Clearwater Area Convention & Visitors Bureau as of the date of this case study.

RECAPITULATION:

Clearwater's 1st Annual Super Boat National Championship Festival was a "thunderous success" as quoted on the front page of the St. Petersburg Times the Tuesday after the event.

October 22, 2010

"JoTo PR has been the PR Agency of Record for the Bright House Super Boat National Championship Festival for 2 years now. When originally asked to come on board in 2009 they only had 6 weeks to deliver. They went over and above to create an overwhelming response for the races via the Tampa Bay media.

"Through a clever and professional PR strategy JoTo PR was able to secure stories and news segments in nearly all the major Tampa Bay media outlets, as well as a multitude of smaller channels which helped create large popularity for the races.

"Again in 2010, JoTo PR flanked Bright House's TV spots with a PR campaign that kept the media informed many weeks in advance of the festival - this time to all of Florida. Their coverage exceeded that of last year resulting in over 100 placements in newspaper, TV and radio spots not only in Tampa Bay, but in various parts of Florida and even international mention.

"JoTo PR works in a thorough and professional manner; they understand the media and work with them to create a win-win situation for both their clients as well as the press. I know with JoTo PR on board that we will be ethically and responsibly represented—and that we will get results!"

With sincere thanks,

Brian Aungst, Sr.

*Senior Director PR & Government Relations, Bright House Networks
Co-Chair, Bright House Super Boat National Championship Festival*

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