

Media Management - What works well in my club/ federation

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As Aurelia Bradeanu stood 7 meters from goal on Sunday 8th of May in the Women's EHF Champions League final she may have known that with one final throw of the ball she and her CSM Bucuresti team mates would be crowned champions. What she wouldn't have known is in doing so she would epitomise all that the Romania Handball Federation (FRH) stands for and the impact this truly would have.

When the ball rippled into the back of the net it was met with a stunned silence from the whole of Europe and indeed the whole handball world, shocked at the success of the maiden entry by the 'underdog' team. This silence of course was soon drowned out to the cheers and elation of the Romanian contingent in the Papp László Budapest Sportaréna and indeed those back in the Romanian capital.

Romania's New Vision

Official figures will tell you that Football is the number 1 sport in Romania with Handball trailing in second but this is mere statistical data that doesn't show the heart and passion that fuels Romanian handball. CSM Bucuresti success is a great case study to reflect how the hard work and organisation not only on the court but also off it is paying off for the FRH in their desires to make handball the number 1 sport in Romania.

Early in 2015 the FRH showed their intentions to bring handball back to the people by employing Lorand Balint as director of a new marketing and sales department, president of FRH Alexandru Dedu was quoted "Marketing is essential in today's sport. Without a marketing department, sport has no future, no matter what sport" as he stated a vision of rebranding the sport in order to reinvigorate the sport with the public, partners and sponsors

Balint's CV speaks for itself with over 15 years marketing experience and acting CEO of one of Romania top advertising agencies, Leo Burnett. The FRH seemingly had found the man to lead their sport into their vision of making handball a sport all Romanians can be proud of.

In less than 18 months in the job Balint has been eager to utilise all the tools at his disposal as well as building on those core elements already in place. TV of course has always been a staple to any sport and Romanian handball is no different, Balint and the RFH continue to have close working relations with the TV media ensuring that handball gets featured across a range of channels.

Social Presence

Away from TV the FRH has been keen to build its social presence and make itself and the sport more accessible to the general public. Social media plays its part in handball just like all sports, the RFH recognises this and understands that access to instant but accurate information is a big driver in connecting people with the sport.

The FRH official website stands as a foundation to the online medium, providing extensive information in easily accessible format. The site goes into specific sport details including a brief history of the game in the country, rules and structure of the institution, rankings, data about competitions and national teams.

The screenshot shows the Romania Handball Federation (FRH) website. The header includes the FRH logo and a navigation menu with links for 'ACASA', 'FRH', 'STIRI', 'COMUNICATE', 'COMPETITII', 'LOTURI NATIONALE', and 'CONTACT'. Below the menu is a banner for 'Handbalul Sport Național' featuring the Romanian flag. A central section displays a grid of upcoming matches with dates, times, and team abbreviations. To the right, there are news snippets with dates and headlines, such as 'JOCURILE DE BARI PENTRU PROMOVAREA IN LIGA NATIONALA MASCULIN' and 'CSM BUCUREȘTI CÂȘTIGĂ CUPA ROMÂNIEI'. At the bottom, there is a 'COMUNICATE / HOTARARI' section with several items dated 21, 19, 19, and 18. The footer includes 'ULTIMELE REZULTATE', 'PROGRAM LOTURI NATIONALE', and 'DETAII'.

Romania Handball Federation Website

Aside from the structural and statistical nature of the sport the site builds on connecting directly with people by having up to date news and providing access to information such as “where to see handball games this week” and “where my child can play handball”. This kind of freely available information shows how the RFH is truly wanting to engage people of all ages and their intentions to have a “grass roots” approach to cultivating new talent into the sport as well as introducing future fans to the sport.

Having this kind of information so accessible has been truly vital to the FRH vision, wanting to bring new people to the game will only serve to strengthen the sport. However, the site now goes one step further to underpin all this great info by implementing its own online shop offering handball memorabilia. The imaginative logo and patriotic use of colours is very well done and they have ensured that all ages are catered for.

Away from the website the RFH continues their social presence on the most popular forms of social media, where they are keen to keep live scores and online streaming making the sports completely accessible whether at home or on the go the sports is at people fingertips.

Sponsorship

Lorand Balint and the Romanian handball federation knew last year that only around 10% of Romanian handball funding was from sponsorship and that was a heavy burden state funding that always put the sport under pressure. They have been keen to tackle this to be more in line with their neighbouring countries to pool more sponsorship and partners into the sport.

They have been successful in bringing in sponsors and technical partners such as XEROX, DPD, BRD and Niro Invest Group. This has increased the funding into the sport and is showing signs that the sport is gaining commercial interest and ultimately the sport is much healthier for this.

This is testament to the effort the RFH marketing has done with campaigns to reflect the positive image of the sport. One of which was the “Gold in all of us” campaign which was based on the U18 team when they became the Mondial champions. This was again reflected in the marketing via TV, Internet as well as the classical mediums such as posters and printed media. These kinds of campaigns have been key in attracting new partners and sponsorship.

Future

Romanian handball is making a new future for itself, its invested wisely in the right people with the right tools and its proof is in teams like CSM Bucuresti whose success can only support and amplify the FRH’s goals to make the sport number 1.

When Lorand Balint visits the Best Marketing event at the Crowne Plaza Bucharest on the 26th May he can hold his head up high about Romanian handball and continue to build on the success the RFH has already achieved for a brighter future for the sport.