



CONNECTING WITH OUR PUBLIC

BY MARTIN GAFFNEY

CONNECTING WITHOURPUBLIC

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND BRAND COMMUNICATIONS IN ACTION
BY MARTIN GAFFNEY

THE SUCCESS STORY
THAT IS COMHALTAS
WILL CONTINUE TO
GROW AND BLOSSOM
**BECAUSE OF THE
INTRINSIC ETHNIC
EMOTIONAL BOND
THAT TRADITIONAL
IRISH MUSIC EVOKES
IN PEOPLE FROM ALL
CULTURES AND ALL
WALKS OF LIFE.**

Mary McAleese

Uachtarán na hÉireann

Fleá na Féile, Mansion House, Dublin 2001



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DONNCHA Ó MUÍNEACHÁIN

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INTRODUCTION

'Connecting with our Public' is a Comhaltas guidelines book for public relations officers working within the various units of the organisation. The book provides a basic introduction to public relations (PR) and covers everything from the environment in which PR operates to PR planning, writing press releases, media choices, budgets and the setting of PR objectives. Importantly it also demonstrates how PR and branding can be used to communicate effectively.

One of the keys to a book of this sort is to find good and interesting examples of how the ideas and recommendations can work. I have tried where possible to avoid generalisations. Instead I have sought out ideas and suggestions from a number of sources including the Dublin and Manchester workshops which provided original contributions from the PROs and other officers who attended.

It also looks at brand communications and how the PRO can use the Comhaltas brand identity to ensure that a consistent image is projected across place and time. The book includes guidelines for the visual identity as well as an introduction to the brand personality and values.

Public relations and brand communications call for skills in researching, planning, direction and evaluation. The aim of the PRO is to achieve a harmonious situation for their branch and ultimately for the Comhaltas movement. This book aims to help PRO's to become valued and respected in their branch and provide a service that achieves their objectives.

*Martin Gaffney ADVC MBA
August 2003*

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FOREWORD

In today's fast evolving world there is an abundance of information presented to each and every one of us on a daily basis. Communities too are changing fast and both urban and rural areas are experiencing change in every aspect of life, work, pastimes, local culture, lifestyle and so on.

It is therefore critical to ensure that when we present Comhaltas it is clearly understood and consistently communicated to our many audiences. The role of the public relations officer is vital in ensuring that our messages are focused and clearly directed.

The on-going development of Comhaltas as a movement and of individual branches is reliant on a good reputation and coherent brand communications. This guidelines book and CD are important tools for use by Public Relations Officers. It offers simple yet effective techniques and tips for managing our communications and for implementing communications plans that help branches achieve their specific objectives.

We are indebted to Martin Gaffney, who is himself a traditional musician, for his invaluable service in making this publication possible. Martin also conducted the PR seminar of Meitheal in the Cultúrlann in January 2003.

Donncha Ó Muíneacháin, the Meitheal leader for this project, is deserving of the grateful appreciation of the whole movement. He has made a magnificent contribution to the programme.

Senator Labhrás Ó Murchú
Director General CCÉ
Dublin, May 2003.

RÉAMHRÁ

Tá an saol ag síorathrú na laethanta seo. Cuirtear flúirse eolais i láthair gach duine againn ar bhonn laethúil agus bíonn an iliomad scéala ag iarraidh ár n-aird a tharraingt. Tá na pobail ag athrú freisin agus tá athruithe móra i ngach gné de shaol na ndaoine-faoin tuath agus sa bhaile mór araon – caitheamh aimsire, cultúr áitiúil, comhdhéanamh an phobail agus mar sin de.

Agus cúrsaí an tsaoil mar atá, tá sé thar a bheith tábhachtach go gcuirimís Comhaltas i láthair na bpobal éagsúil ar bhealach a chuirfidh lena dtuiscint orainn. Tá ról bunúsach riachtanach ag an oifigeach caidrimh phoiblí san obair seo, le cinntiú go gcuirimid ár dteachtairreachtaí trasna ar bhealach atá dírithe go soiléir.

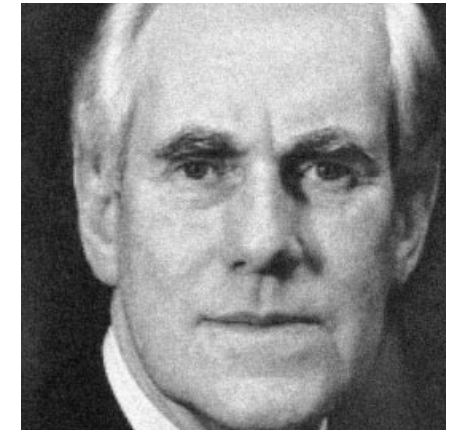
Braitheann forbairt Chomhaltais mar eagraíocht agus forbairt a chraobhacha ar a dhea-chlú agus ar chruinneas ár gcumarsáide 'branda'. Is uirlis thábhachtach na treoilinte seo agus is féidir leis an oifigeach caidreamh poiblí leas a bhaint astu ag leibhéal na craoibhe. Cuireann siad teicnící agus noda ar fáil chun cabhrú linn i mbainisteoireacht ár gcuid cumarsáide agus na bpleananna a chabhraíonn leis na craobhacha a gcuid aidhmeanna a bhaint amach. Táimid buíoch de Mháirtín Mac Gamhna, duine gur ceoltóir traidisiúnta é féin, as an gcúnamh fírluachmhar a thug sé chun go gcuirfí an

foilseachán seo ar fáil. Ba é Máirtín freisin a rinne an seimineár ar chúrsaí caidreamh poiblí, a bhí ag Meitheal, a riar i mí Eanáir 2003 sa Chultúrlann.

Tá mórghluaisne ar gluaiseachta ar fad tuille ag Donncha Ó Muíneacháin, treoraí ag Meitheal don tionscadal seo. Tá cion fir ar fheabhas déanta aige ar son an chláir ar fad.

Is éard atá sa bhfoilseachán seo ná achoimre ar na teicnící atá rí-thábhachtach chun an caidreamh poiblí agus an chumarsáid 'branda' a bhainistiú agus a chomhordú ag leibhéal na craoibhe. Bainigí leas astu!

An Seanadóir Labhrás Ó Murchú
Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ
Baile Átha Cliath, Bealtaine 2003





Chapter 1

CONNECTING WITHOUT PUBLIC

Comhaltas was formed in 1951 and is the largest body involved in the promotion of Irish traditional music. The movement has over 400 branches in 13 countries and 35,000 members on 5 continents.

The aims of Comhaltas are:

- *To promote traditional music in all its forms*
- *To restore the playing of the harp and uilleann pipes in the national life of Ireland*
- *To promote Irish traditional dancing and singing*
- *To foster and promote the Irish language at all times*
- *To create a closer bond among all lovers of Irish music*
- *To co-operate with all bodies working for the restoration of Irish culture*
- *To establish branches throughout the country and abroad to achieve the foregoing aims and objectives*

After a half-century of growth, the movement is now entering a new era with a fresh outlook. The innovative Meitheal initiative provides the strategic direction and a renewed vision that includes making the traditional arts accessible to all citizens and promoting appreciation, enjoyment and greater participation in the arts. It also seeks to heighten the visibility of the arts and raise awareness especially in young people. Above all, it aims to strengthen the movement of Comhaltas itself.

People and communicating with people are at the heart of Comhaltas and its activities. The movement has relationships with a great many audiences and managing these relationships is central to achieving its aims. This book provides management guidelines on two of the most important areas of communication: public relations and brand communications.



Chapter 1: (Cont'd)



MEITHEAL

*Meitheal is a fundamental element of the Comhaltas **Athnuachán** (renewal) programme. It seeks to harness the creativity, idealism, energies and talent of those individuals within Comhaltas and others outside the movement with a similar vision in order to build on the major successes of the last fifty years as we face into the challenge of the next fifty.*

CHALLENGES

The world is a very different place from what it was in 1951 when Comhaltas was founded and our traditional culture now faces many new challenges. Some of these include:

Uniformity

Media control is now concentrated in fewer and fewer hands as seen with satellite TV and the buying of Irish radio/local press by overseas groups.

Influence of the Media

The media was once news oriented but is now agenda driven attempting to lead public opinion (opinion formers, power of the 'sound-bite', etc.).

Globalisation

Multi-nationals and commercial considerations now take precedence over local culture/identity; profit rather than community is the driving force.

COMHALTAS RESPONSE

There are many areas where action can be taken to combat these influences on our traditional culture and the main ones have been identified by the national Meitheal working group as follows;

- *Philosophy*
- *Education*
- *Community*
- *Art Forms*
- *Networking*
- *Communications*
- *Gaeilge*
- *Events*
- *Funding*
- *Structure*

For Meitheal to succeed it should be implemented at all levels throughout Comhaltas. This applies to provincial and county/regional boards and, perhaps most importantly of all, at local branch level.

While 2001 was the year for celebration of what has been achieved in the first fifty years, 2002 the year that we began to build on this success to secure the future for our traditional Irish culture.



Chapter 2

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public Relations can be defined as 'a planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its public.' Above all else the role of PR is 'to create understanding'.

Traditionally each CCÉ branch has appointed a Public Relations Officer (PRO) at a branch annual general meeting. To be effective PROs should have an ability to communicate and organise. They should also be able to get on with people and display personal integrity and imagination as well as having a healthy curiosity and interest in the media. However, the role of the PRO can be best described as a 'Jack-of-all-trades' where a basic knowledge of many subjects is essential. These include, media, graphics, printing, photography, video recording, display and research. Establishing understanding and transferring knowledge about a particular subject are at the core of the PRO role.

Understanding Public Relations

Before embarking on a PR campaign it is essential to understand an important aspect of the human condition, one to which PR seeks to respond. People are fundamentally influenced by their physical and cultural environment which includes their family background and the wider community to which they belong. Over time, positive and negative perceptions and opinions are formed about many things: this is normal and is the basis for human decision making.

With this in mind it is important to understand that the people with whom Comhaltas communicates will have a mixture of negative and positive perceptions of it, depending on the sum of their influences to date. Naturally we would like all our audiences to be positive towards us. Through public relations, our aim is to convert negative views to positive through the transfer of new and up-to-date knowledge about the movement or a unit thereof and thus bring about an accurate understanding of what we are and what we do.

NO PR ACTIVITY CAN SUCCEED IF UNDERSTANDING IS LACKING?



Chapter 2: (Cont'd)

In their work PROs encounter a variety of opinions towards Comhaltas, both favourable and unfavourable. One of the main aims of public relations is to positively influence less favourable opinions. In order to 'shift' opinions it is important to understand the nature of negative and positive perceptions. Jefkins' illustrates four:

NEGATIVE SITUATION **POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENT**

**HOSTILITY
PREJUDICE
APATHY
IGNORANCE**

**SYMPATHY
ACCEPTANCE
INTEREST
KNOWLEDGE**

Before undertaking any PR activity, it is necessary to establish the extent and nature of hostility, prejudice, apathy and ignorance that exist in the audiences.



HOSTILITY ↔ SYMPATHY

[Antagonism, opposition and resistance]

Hostility can exist for many reasons and is evident in many ways: hostility towards the traditional arts, Comhaltas itself, individuals, the branch and so on. Hostility is generally based on past experiences and misunderstandings. Through managed PR techniques, we seek to gain understanding and achieve at the very least a sympathetic attitude.

For example:

A hostile attitude may prevail for years following a past negative experience. Indeed it can be inherited by children, preventing them from accessing the traditional arts through Comhaltas. It is the PRO's responsibility to ensure that those who hold the negative view are reassured that such a negative experience will not recur.

Hostility often develops between new and existing members of a branch – each feeling threatened by the other. The hostility of professionals to amateurs is commonplace in many art forms. The traditional arts are no exception.



PREJUDICE ↔ ACCEPTANCE

[Preconceived judgements and irrational attitudes]

Like hostility, prejudice is formed from early influences, one's upbringing, environment and education. Social trends too create prejudice on a mass scale: in the 1950s and 1960s many Irish people held the view that Irish music was baggage from old Ireland and was something to leave behind. As time passed movements such as Comhaltas and the re-surgence of 'folk music' gradually changed the public attitude. Trends continue in Irish music and no more so than today with so many young people now choosing it as a viable career option (unheard of in the sixties due to mass prejudice). Through PR activity we seek to convert prejudice into acceptance.

Comhaltas has always targeted young people as the key to keeping the tradition alive. Young people can be deterred by the prejudice of society, a parent or a group of friends. Their view of the movement may be prejudiced by whether it is 'cool' and if it fits with their perception of youth culture.



APATHY ↔ INTEREST

[Lack of interest or concern, indifference]

In every voluntary organisation, membership participation is essential for survival. However, today, there are many demands on peoples time; it is easy to say 'sure somebody else will do it'. People are also naturally conservative and inclined to resist change. In this time of extreme social and cultural change for Comhaltas, it is necessary to break down unwillingness and get people interested through sustained PR activity.

Even among the membership, people who are supportive may not get involved. Their apathy, lack of interest and non-attendance at meetings and branch activities can become a problem, which, if allowed to continue, can spread in time to others.



IGNORANCE ↔ KNOWLEDGE

[Showing lack of knowledge, no comprehension]

A condition everyone suffers from. There are many people who know nothing about Comhaltas and have no opinion about it. There are also negative attitudes formed based on limited exposure to Irish music- such as a one-off visit to a session where drink and music are mixed to detrimental effect. The PRO seeks to convert ignorance into knowledge in order to enable people to draw their own conclusions.

Once formed, perceptions and views are hard to change. Some people perceive Irish Traditional arts as being old fashioned. In 2002, 230 000 people attended the All Ireland Fleadh Cheoil of which an estimated 65% were young people. On the same weekend 80 000 attended Slane Rock Festival.



Chapter 3

MANAGING PUBLIC RELATIONS

In managing public relations, the emphasis must be on specific objectives that achieve results which can be measured. It must be:

- *Accountable*
- *Cost-effective*
- *Tangible*

Planning PR

Unlike tunes, it is not played by ear! PR must be planned over a specific length of time and should centre around a documented plan that includes an outline of the current situation, a definition of a specific objective and the audience to be targeted. In addition, a good plan will set out realistic PR media and techniques that can be successfully delivered within the resources of the branch PRO.

***PR IS NOT SHORT-ERM
OR OFF THE CUFF***

To be successful, PR must have a plan, an organised programme over a specific length of time, for example (e.g. Comhaltas membership year or school year).

What's in a plan?

1. *Appraisal and review of the situation*
2. *Determining the objectives*
3. *Definition of publics*
4. *Media and techniques*
5. *The budget*
6. *Assessment of results*

Chapter 3: (Cont'd)

1. REVIEW OF THE SITUATION

As defined above, public relations is concerned with creating and maintaining understanding of the organisation in its public. In order to begin this process, it is necessary to establish what they currently know (or do not know) about Comhaltas. By reviewing the current situation we are establishing the extent and nature of hostility, prejudice, apathy and ignorance that exists in our audiences.

What you think you are and what your audience think you are should be reasonably similar. However, it is not always the case.



Methods of appraising the current situation:

Market research

Market research is the systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of information relevant to marketing decisions. This is also known as primary research and is the gathering of previously unavailable information. This is normally carried out by a professional market research company and requires a budget and very clear objectives.

Desk research

Desk research is the most common and popular method of collecting information; it is done by reviewing published reports and materials (both by Comhaltas and other organisations) that contain valuable statistics and views on the movement.

Media attitudes

Feedback from press cuttings is always worth considering. What are they saying? Is the message right? Are they critical or sympathetic? Depending on your branch, this can consist of local newspapers and some specialist newsletters and magazines. If possible try also to capture recordings of local radio attitudes during interviews with members and non-members. It is also very important to check media attitudes following a change of editor or journalist on the publication or programme.

Community relations

How is the branch regarded by the people who live and work in the vicinity of the branch centre? It is worth taking the trouble to find how local residents feel about Comhaltas. It may also help in recruiting new members.

Member relations

A confidential, impartial survey can help to glean views from current members who may otherwise keep their views to themselves. Poor relations and disgruntled members may have resulted from grapevine information and unfortunate misunderstandings rather than from genuine grievances.

Branch staff (committee, teachers and helpers) all have contact with members. If they are well informed and knowledgeable, they can be the best 'image' makers whilst performing a key public relations role.

COMPLAINTS

It is worth discussing the nature and extent of complaints with those in the branch who receive them. Complaints often form the basis for PR objectives. Whether we like it or not complaints are a rich source of feedback and barometer for changing opinions. When interpreted in this way complaints are free advice.



**IT IS GOOD
PRACTICE TO
COLLECT AND FILE
PRESS CUTTINGS**

Chapter 3: (Cont'd)

2. DETERMINING THE OBJECTIVES

Following the review the PRO can take an advisory role at local level and offer a plan aimed at solving the communication problems they have discovered. Thus the PRO is taking the initiative rather than solely doing what (s)he is being told or simply sending out press releases or generating newsletters.

Once the PRO has completed the research and reviewed the situation, it is now time to specify what changes need to be made in the branch's relationship with its public.

You can not plan without objectives

Objectives

At the workshop held in conjunction with the PR seminar in January 2003, PROs suggested a number of useful ideas and objectives, These are included in **Appendix 1**. The following are examples of specific PR objectives.

- *Organise a community relations programme to promote understanding among local community leaders who would spread their knowledge to others*
- *Improve (or start) the flow of news to local editors in readiness for an event*

- *Develop in-depth understanding with relevant journalists by organising a series of visits for them (e.g. to classes, weekly or monthly session)*
- *Co-operate with local history society to organise a town/area traditional arts history exhibition*
- *Seek coverage of events in the press, radio and TV*
- *Organise local and national coverage of Fleadh winners & runners up*
- *Promote interesting news stories such as a unique personality in the branch*
- *Seek a sponsor for, and make a video about, your work in developing musical talent in the community*
- *Organise a series of interviews on local radio for the Chairperson on return from his/her overseas visit*
- *Seek a sponsor for a newsletter for members and make it quarterly instead of yearly*

Defining objectives

The final choices will ultimately depend on the aims of Comhaltas, of the local branch, the specific communications problems identified, the budget, the available hours and other calls on PRO time. Having defined the objectives, we can now decide to whom to communicate them.



Chapter 3: (Cont'd)

3. DEFINITION OF PUBLICS

As members of a movement that promotes performance and entertainment, it is natural for us to think in terms of audiences; however, communication with an audience is for the most part one-way. Comhaltas has many 'publics'. There is no such thing as the general public. ⁶ A member of the general public can also be; an office worker, a parent, a golfer, a gardener, an amateur photographer or a lover of Irish Traditional Arts.

BASIC PUBLICS:

The community

Who is the community? Is it the branch neighbourhood? or neighbouring communities (with maybe no branch). All PROs need to identify the specific community with which they are dealing.

Communicating and building awareness within the community includes impactful branding of events such as the Fleadh Cheoil, open days, workshops and sponsored events. These should be credited to Comhaltas through coherent branding and endorsement (All banners, backdrops, leaflets and programmes should display the correct Comhaltas logotype).

- *It is important, especially in built-up urban areas, to encourage the opening of new branches;*

"If there is no branch in your district gather together the Irish musicians and form one"

- *At every opportunity, invite people to look for further information on the Comhaltas movement;*

"The public is also invited to avail of the opportunity of obtaining information on the work of the movement provided at the enquiry office during the Fleadh"



Potential members

Who are potential members? Are they living or working in the vicinity? They could be relatives or friends of present members, local school children and students or members of other related organisations with an affinity with the traditional arts. Send regular information to schools. It is very important to ensure that the good reputation of Comhaltas and the local branch is clearly communicated to potential members.

Members

Members consist of committee, parents, pupils, helpers and others. Earlier we described the importance of understanding their views. 'Speak up schemes' are good for encouraging feedback on an on going basis. Introductory packs and branch information evenings are vital for explaining and reminding members of the aims of the movement and the activities of the branch, as well as expectations of them.

The branch newsletter is vital for membership communications, every effort should be made to bring one out, even if it is simply a quarterly one pager in black and white.

A sample newsletter template is illustrated in Appendix 1 and is available as a Word template on the CD that accompanies this book.

Suppliers

Those who provide services to the branch include; teachers, adjudicators, instrument makers and shops, and even record companies. They are in contact with the wider community and are in a position to refer to and talk positively about the branch. They should be included on the newsletter mailing list and invited to annual events.

Opinion leaders

These are people who express opinions and influence people because of their apparent authority. They may be dangerous or helpful, depending on their knowledge and understanding. They can be grouped like this:

- *Parents, teachers, academics, clergy*
- *Politicians*
- *Commentators, presenters*
- *Journalists, radio and TV presenters*
- *Authorities on the traditional arts who write/lecture*
- *Professional bodies and associations*

Having defined the public relevant to our objectives, we can now consider what media is appropriate to reach them.

Chapter 3: (Cont'd)

4. MEDIA AND TECHNIQUES

The mass media include the national and local press, publications and broadcast media. Other media include: magazines, directories, yearbooks, annuals, diaries and so on.

Some PROs are experienced and already familiar with their media choices. If you are new to public relations or unfamiliar with your region's media, get a media directory. Talk to editors and journalists and let them know you are the PRO for Comhaltas. Establish what they want and when they want it.

Editors throw out nine of ten press releases received. This is usually due to a lack of regional tie-in or because it is more advertising than news. When writing a press release use the six W's to guide your wording:

- *Who is the story about?*
- *What happened?*
- *When did it happen?*
- *Where did it happen?*
- *Why did it happen?*
- *What were the consequences?*

The choice of media is dependent on the public you are trying to reach. Having defined the various publics, the choice should be straightforward, although choosing media is important as it has implications for the PR plan in terms of hours and cost. The following is a summary of the main media types that should be considered:



MEDIA

Broadcasting media

- *Television*
- *Satellite TV*
- *Radio*
- *Folk, traditional and ethnic 'local' channels*
- *Internet*
- *Open air events*
- *Cinema broadcast*

Video

- *Video house journal (video version of newsletter; would promote national or international branch twinning)*
- *Documentary (sponsor driven)*
- *Recruitment (offered to schools, loan to youth organisations)*
- *Induction (for new members)*

Live performances

- *Annual concert (for visitors)*
- *Workshops, seminars, meetings and sessions*
- *Evening receptions (informal gathering on a specific topic)*
- *Sessions (opportunity to invite non-members)*

Educational media

- *Meetings*
- *Internal (among branch)*
- *External (with others)*

Public Relations literature

- *Newsletters*
- *Press 'news' release*
- *Invitation cards*
- *Calendar of events*
- *Posters and wall charts*
- *Educational leaflets*
- *Folders*

- *Booklets*
- *Instruction leaflets*
- *Picture postcards*
- *Questionnaires*
- *Branch history*
- *School project packs*
- *Reprints of feature articles*
- *Fleadh programmes*

5. THE BUDGET

When considering a PR plan, there are four principle PR costs:

- *Time*
- *Hours (e.g. editing newsletter)*
- *Materials (Stationery, postage, photographs, print, video, cassettes, displays, etc...)*
- *Expenses (Couriers, taxi fares, travel and hotel expenses and hospitality).*

Chapter 3: (Cont'd)

6. ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

There are three main ways to evaluate the results of the PR programme:

6.1. By observation and experience

Some objectives will be seen to be achieved. The PRO may wish to attract more teenagers to remain active in the branch following completion of a final year at second level; have the numbers increased, remained the same or dwindled?

As a result of good communications with the events listings press; have the events of the branch been better attended and drawn new audiences interested in the activities of the local Comhaltas branch.

6.2. By feedback and its assessment

Public relations is a two-way process. Part of the role is to initiate and maintain a dialogue and inflow of information. This will come in the form of complaints, ideas, suggestions, reports and also by means of press cuttings, monitored broadcasts and independent reports.

You may have to act if it is inaccurate. Correcting mistakes is a key part of the PRO role. Each individual will have their own style and favourite method of managing public relations. For those who use and rely on media coverage to achieve PR objectives, there are five ways⁹ to evaluate coverage:

- * *Record which papers or programmes have covered the story; What is the quality of the coverage? What was the tone of the reporting - there can be a very recognisable tone between past and present coverage*
- * *Evaluate the potential readership or audience by multiplying each appearance of the story by the published circulation or readership figures*



* *Picture usage can also be counted. It is a good indication of which publications should be sent pictures or not. Money is often wasted sending materials to those who will not publish them.*

* *Voice is another form of measurement. In the case of Comhaltas, what share of local radio, traditional music programmes was achieved?*

* *If the objective was to generate reaction to a call for information on the branch, the actual response can be evaluated.*

6.3 By research

When describing ways of reviewing the situation we covered the various methods and types of research. If the objective of the programme is to effect a change or improvement in awareness, attitude or image, then primary research can be used to measure its effectiveness

MOVING FORWARD WITH PUBLIC RELATIONS

At the outset, it was stated that to be successful, PR needs to work to a plan - an organised programme over a specific length of time.

Through a thorough and 'honest' review of the situation, it is possible to set specific objectives that are achievable and realistic, targeted at a select public, using appropriate, affordable media and techniques, that most importantly, get measurable results.'

Globalisation and the pervasive influence of American culture has been the strongest factor in changing local culture and identity. Throughout the world Comhaltas has always worked closely with local communities to preserve our cultural heritage and spread awareness.

Public Relations plays a central role in maintaining a basic understanding of what Comhaltas is and what it represents. PR must be used carefully and planned wisely to make the optimum use of the efforts of the many PROs who so willingly give of their time and talent to ensure that through the Comhaltas Movement, the Traditional Arts of Ireland are nurtured and promoted into the future.

Recognition



Association



Chapter 4

BRAND COMMUNICATIONS

All organisations communicate all the time. Everything we do or say is a form of communication.¹⁰

The totality of the way we present ourselves is known as our 'brand'. There are two aspects to consider when looking at the brand:

- * *Recognition (the things we see)*
- ♥ *Association (the things we feel)*

Brand recognition

This is what we see of the brand; it consists of the name and visual identity and includes basic elements such as the mark (or logo), the specific style of lettering (or type) and a distinctive colour scheme. A visual identity has to work at many levels. It must be aesthetically and visually creative, represent some idea, character or quality. It must also be instantly recognisable, and be suitable for applying to numerous applications from stationery to banners to programmes, stage backdrops and so on.

In the 1800s cattle were branded in order to tell the world who they belonged to. Similarly today organisations use branding to promote their goods and services. The Comhaltas identity works in this way. However, over time the visual identity can become weakened. It is not uncommon for Fleadh programmes to appear without Comhaltas Branding, it is important that Comhaltas retains ownership over all of its activities. It cannot do this if the brand is not applied coherently.

Consistency in brand communications
As a world wide organisation with people creating their own promotional materials, the Comhaltas identity can become inconsistent and fragmented. It is essential that every piece of communication projects a consistent image.

In conjunction with the publication of this book, the Comhaltas visual identity has been refined to make it more adaptable to the diversity of applications where it is used. The revised logotypes are shown on page 35 and are available on CD Rom from CCÉ.

It is important that PROs are familiar with the logotypes so that the Comhaltas brand has a consistent identity across all applications wherever it is used. Awareness of Comhaltas among its publics is strengthened by the consistent use of the logotype.

The aim is to project an appropriate and consistent image of Comhaltas.



GUIDE TO USING THE LOGOTYPE:

The logotype is available to use in three basic forms.

Two colour, single colour and black – all in positive and negative versions.

The Logo

2 Colour



1 Colour



Black or white



Clear space

An area equivalent to the diameter of the roundel should be left clear around the logotype.



Colour

MAROON

Pantone 202

Process C0% M100% Y65% K 47%

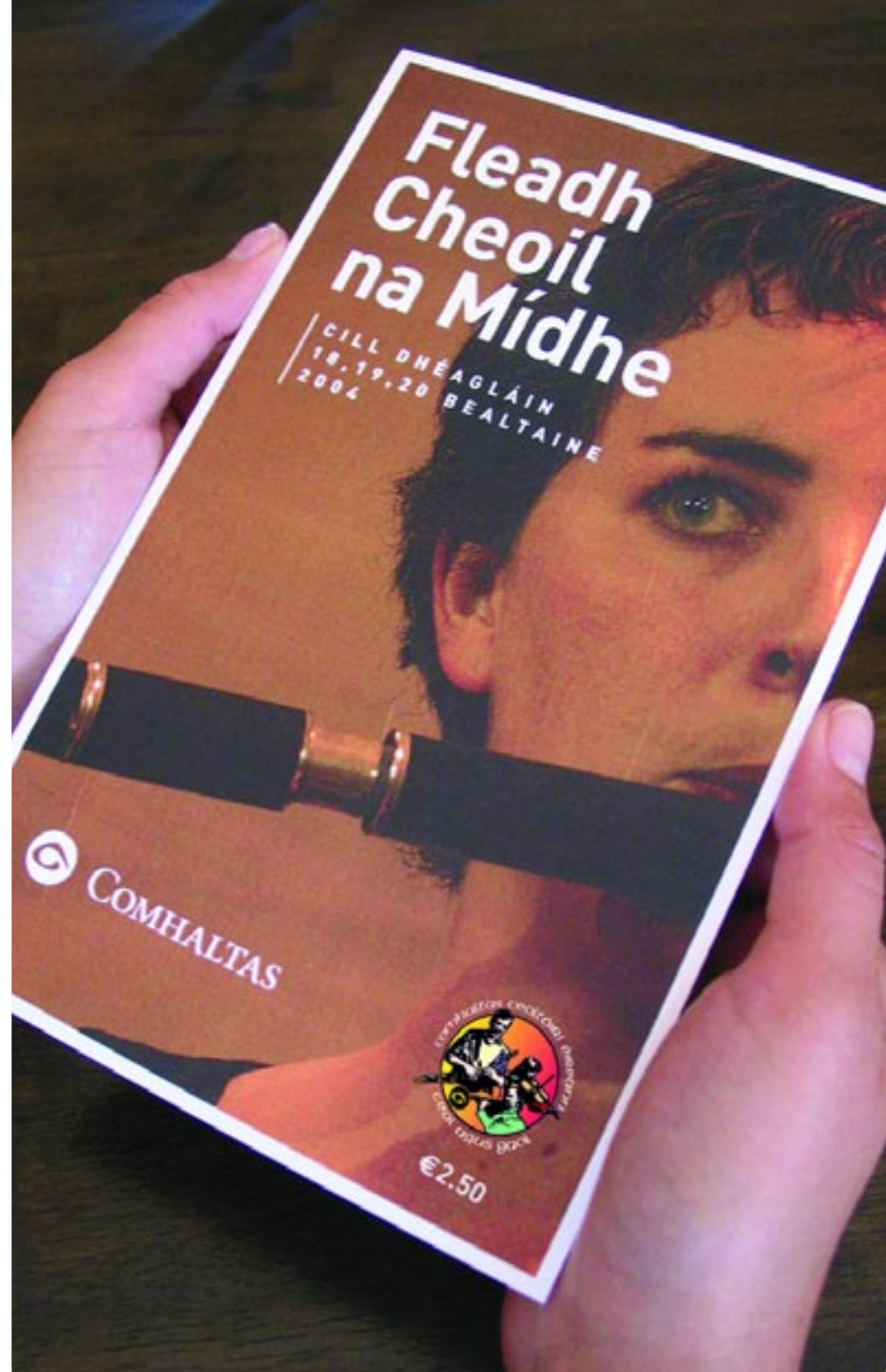
PURPLE

Pantone 519

Process C76% M96% Y38% K 0%



Colour Ratio



Chapter 5 Brand Communications

BRAND ASSOCIATION

It has been suggested that if we are to regain our sense of personal and national identity, which it is claimed has been lost over the last period of our economic and political history, then we need to relate to brands core values.

Today brands are more about values and less about logos. At Designworks we often refer to the 'idea' or essence of the brand. The brand can be described as the organisation's sense of self or the special character of an organisation. The brand idea needs to be understandable and memorable and to develop appropriate associations and perceptions of the organisation it represents. The following are the values at the heart of the Comhaltas brand.



COMHALTAS BRAND VALUES

- Strong
- Unique
- Friendly
- Co-operative
- Unified
- Supportive
- Traditional
- Contemporary
- Vibrant
- Living
- Active
- Resourceful
- Communicative
- Conversationalist

When writing press releases or preparing newsletters, programmes posters etc., PROs should be aware of how the values are reflected in the tone and language of the message.

Conveying brand values

Consider the images selected for a branch newsletter - are the people pictured enjoying the performance? Is there a sense of community and tradition? By simply asking the question - a different and more favourable image may be selected.

Corporate branding is like an outfit which is as unique as your thumb-print, that defines ones character and personality clearly and in a way that attracts people into your orbit¹²

Comhaltas communications need to reflect the movements values. Use events such as The Fleadh Cheoil and the branch session to photograph the interaction of performers and audiences - one of the most potent representations of the values at the heart of the Comhaltas Movement.

Over time PROs should endeavour to build a library of good photographs of interesting traditional arts activities which clearly reflect Comhaltas brand values.

SUBBRANDS

As outlined earlier, the Comhaltas logotype takes pride of place in all communications. In addition to the principle logotype, there are two additional sub-brands intended for specific use;

Ceol agus Gaol

The colourful Ceol agus Gaol emblem captures the spirit of Comhaltas in a simple mark. It is useful for attracting attention particularly on promotional literature, materials and displays. This mark is used for embellishment purposes, where possible it should be used in conjunction with the Comhaltas logotype.



Athnuachan

Following on from it's 2001 50th anniversary, Comhaltas introduced a renewal programme (Athnuachan) in 2002. The mark is for use on all communications associated with the activities of the Athnuachan program.





CONCLUSION

The aim of this book has been to demonstrate the power of Connecting with our Public and to suggest ways in which Comhaltas PROs can learn and harness new skills to deliver their objectives. Managing PR and brand is only the beginning, success is based asustained effort and a long-term process. The real challenge here is to change mindsets away from prejudiced or old fashioned views to a more organic image which grows through the involvement and enthusiasm of others.

Epilogue

In her address at Fleá na Féile in the Mansion House, Dublin in 2001, President McAleese summarised the significance of Comhaltas

"The efforts of an army of volunteers all over Ireland, Britain, The USA, Canada and in places further afield like Russia, Japan, Hungary, Sardinia and Australia have showcased Irish culture with zest no other nation can match."

From a public relations perspective, PROs can focus that same **'EFFORT'** to showcase and promote Comhaltas.

REFERENCES

- *An Bunreacht*
- *Comhaltas Annual Report*
- *Treoir*
- *Comhaltas Website*
<http://www.comhaltas.com>
- *Comhaltas Internet TV Programme*
<http://www.comhaltaslive.ie>
- *Fleadh Rules*
- *SCT Examinations Syllabus*
- *TTCT Teachers' Diploma Course Guidelines*

*Copies of documents listed above
are available on request from:
Comhaltas Head Office, 32 Belgrave Square,
Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland
E-mail: enquiries@comhaltas.com*

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1. *The British Journal of Public Relations*, 1969 (revised)
- 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, Jenkins, F (2002) *'Public Relations Techniques'* Oxford: Buitterworth Heinemann
5. Hague, P & Jackson P (1999) *'Market Research'* 2nd Ed. London: Kogan Page
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8. *Comments from the PR workshops*
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Appendix 1 Ideas & suggestions

PR OBJECTIVES

The following is a selection of the ideas, comments and suggested PR objectives, put forward by PROs during the exchange of views and group workshops at the Comhaltas PR Seminars in Dublin and Manchester in 2003.

Promoting participation

- *Involve parents in their children's progression musically – they may become involved in the administration.*

Retaining young members

- *Target the 20-35 year age group, who may have been very involved as children and in their teens in the Comhaltas scene. Encourage them to return to appropriate social events.*
- *Launch a communications campaign on college and secondary school campuses linked to local branches*
- *Set up branches in third level institutions - in particular during 'Freshers-week' in first year*

Promoting links with other organisations

- *Form links with local clubs, societies, organisations, involved with history, culture and music – to organise shared events*
- *Co-operate with a local history society to organise a town/area traditional arts history exhibition*

Promoting public awareness

- *Arrange for performances to be presented in high profile settings, such as shopping centres, churches, agriculture shows and public/tourist information centres*
- *Invite groups of visitors to the branch classes and events, such as school parties and other traditional arts associations and activity groups*
- *Organise a community relations programme to promote understanding among local community leaders who would spread their knowledge to others*

Improve media relations

- *Improve (or start) the flow of news to local editors in readiness for an event*
- *Develop in-depth understanding in relevant journalists by organising a series of visits for them (for example. to classes)*
- *Seek more coverage of events on press, radio and TV*
- *Organise local and national coverage of Fleadh winners and runners up*
- *Organise a series of interviews on local radio for the Chairman on return from an overseas visit.*
- *Issue news stories about unique personalities within the branch (unusual stories of human accomplishment) e.g. late learners/winners*
- *Issue and promote success stories - enlist the co-operation and tap the experience and good name of famous artists who were previously members of the branch (Most will want to give something back, if asked)*

Appendix 2 Sample PR Plan

This illustration is a greatly simplified version of a structured PR plan, the plan should run to as many pages as is required.

1. REVIEW OF THE SITUATION

Issues uncovered through the research

Very little awareness of the branch in local community

Traditional arts not accessible to some young people

2. DETERMINING THE OBJECTIVES

Make objectives as precise as possible

Organise outside visitors to the branch classes and events: such as school parties and other traditional arts associations and groups.

3. DEFINITION OF PUBLICS

List audiences to communicate with

Young people and the local community living and working nearby

4. SELECTION OF MEDIA AND TECHNIQUES

Specific and appropriate choices

Open day at local town centre with live music and dance. Flyers about classes and weekly session. Advertisement of session and classes in local newspaper.

5. THE BUDGET

Materials listed with cost estimates

Free truck (for stage) on loan from a member for a day.

€80 for printing the flyers. €110 for ads over 3 issues

6. ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

Accountable, Tangible etc.

Increase in numbers attending the classes

Increase in numbers enquiring about branch

Increase in attendance at weekly session by listeners as well as performers.

Appendix 3
News letter and
Press release

Nuachtán

FRIDAY, AUGUST 8, 2003

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PRESS RELEASE

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PROs are encouraged to promote and develop a
newsletter and press releases for their branch
that observes the brand identity guidelines. The
recommended typefaces are Georgia for body
text, Trade Gothic Condensed or Impact for
masthead and titles. If available Clarendon Bold
may also be used for titles (as shown in this book).



CD-ROM

A CD-Rom is available to accompany this book and includes the following items:

- *Press release template*
- *Useful quotations document*
- *New member information document*
- *Newsletter template*
- *Comhaltas logotype artwork files*
- *Sub-brand artwork files*

To receive a copy please contact:

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