



XA04C1280

Communications Strategy for the Chornobyl* Centre

Mykola Kurilchik (International Chornobyl Centre)
Len Green (NNC)

Introduction

This Communications Strategy was developed for the International Chornobyl Centre (ICC) as part of a joint UK/Ukraine project, sponsored by the Department of Trade and Industry and NNC Limited. The Plan was developed during four weeks of workshop discussions in the UK between staff from the centre and experienced PR Professionals from NNC Limited.

The requirements for a sustained communications activity at the ICC go much further than simply enhancing or promoting the Centre's scientific and technical activities. Raising sufficient awareness of the Centre among potential funding agents and commercial partners is critical to its future development as a major Centre for international co-operation and research. It is only through establishing and developing effective communications that the Centre will become well enough known and understood both within the Ukraine, and internationally, to secure its long term future.

However, as the workshop programme unfolded, it also became clear that communications was in itself a legitimate and necessary **function** of the Centre, and part of the foundations of its existence. The Centre has a fundamental role as an 'information exchange', collecting and communicating information from within the Ukraine to the rest of the world, and interpreting world interest and attitudes to the Ukraine Government and nuclear industry. As such it compliments the efforts of individual power plant and corporate PR functions within the Ukraine nuclear energy sector.

Developing the Strategy

Implementing a communications programme both to Ukraine and international audiences is seen as a vital objective to establish the Centre and to secure its long term stability and growth. Indeed, the effective flow of reliable and credible information both from the International community into the Ukraine, and from the Ukraine to the rest of the world is part of the very lifeblood of the Centre.

To develop the Communications Strategy it was necessary for everyone to:

- Be absolutely clear on the role and purpose of the Chornobyl Centre.
- Honestly identify our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.
- Identify who our 'target' audiences were.
- Decide what messages we need to communicate
- Determine how to communicate them

Having determined **who** to tell, **what** to tell, **why** to tell and **how** to tell, the workshop participants developed an 'ideal' strategy required.

Communications objectives

- Raise awareness of the Chornobyl Centre nationally and internationally
- Promote understanding of, and support for, the Centre's purpose and role(s)
- Establish the Centre's credibility as a technical authority for Chornobyl-related research and development

* 'Chornobyl' is the Ukraine spelling

- Help share information about Chornobyl throughout the world. Develop a reliable and technically credible 'information exchange' between national and international audiences
- Create a strong image and identity for the Centre
- Foster partnerships with international nuclear utilities, companies and contractors, and to understand clearly the needs, motivations and cultural differences of partners in the West
- Seek customers for the Chornobyl Centre's scientific and research capabilities, both in the Ukraine and internationally
- Win support from international funding agencies, and those who can influence funding decisions
- Foster a spirit of co-operation within the Ukraine, and counter misperceptions from some quarters. To facilitate information exchange within the Ukraine
- Advise Ukraine and international governments on Chornobyl-related issues
- Establish a system of in-house communications
- Identify the resources needed to execute communications activities.

Recommended communications activities

The following communications activities and initiatives were identified to meet the Centre's objectives and to communicate key messages to the appropriate target audiences:

- Develop a strong **corporate identity**
- The Centre should carry out a planned and sustained **media relations** programme to encourage the media to adopt a positive attitude towards the Centre, and to use the media to deliver key messages to the Centre's target audiences.
- Establish a **World Wide Web site** for the Centre. A phased approach is recommended, which begins by designing and producing a basic site that explains the role and purpose of the Centre to international audiences.
- Develop a sustained and **pro-active briefing role** to priority national and international audiences. That means that the Centre does not just wait for others to enquire about certain issues and events, but that it takes the lead to establish its 'information exchange' role. A number of related activities could be developed as part of a package, aimed at giving regular and reliable briefings to a core target audience. These could include:
 1. Regular briefing sheets or newsletters
 2. Cuttings service
 3. Seminars
 4. Acting as a trade association
Ukraine does not have an equivalent trade association to for example, the UK's BNIF. As such it will act as a central point to exchange market information between member companies. This activity would help the Centre to establish its role as a central co-ordinator and win friends and influence positive perceptions within the Ukraine industry.
- Produce a range of Publications.
Of those considered, two issues of the ICC's international news magazine 'Insight' have been produced. These were funded by the UK 's DT I under its programme of support for the project. The strategy is aimed at making the magazine, which will be published quarterly, self-financing. The Centre also proposes a professional journal; a Ukraine industry directory; promotional brochures; an overall marketing/capability brochure; technical capability sheets and annual reports.
- To underpin its pro-active promotional work, aimed at attracting international funding agencies and commercial partners, a programme of visit and contact planning will be developed.
- Exhibitions, seminars, and Road shows
- Internal communications including a programme of team briefing.

How much can we really achieve?

From the start, it was clear that the resources available to support these communications objectives are severely limited. Implementing the strategy is left to middle managers as an additional task to their specified duties. As such, time spent on this task has to compete with the demands and pressures of other functions. Creative solutions are therefore, needed to identify ways of delivering the communications activities that are so essential to the Centre's future. It is clear that achieving all the objectives outlined with the current resources is very difficult, if not impossible.

To match aspirations to resources therefore, ICC must:

- Recognise that creative approaches and 'lateral thinking' are required if major communications initiatives are to be resourced
- Encourage a positive attitude in its staff based on 'how can we make the most of what we have got?' - a 'can-do' culture - rather than seeing barriers or obstacles to progress, based on having no time nor money
- Identify low-cost, high impact PR activities that can be accommodated within existing resources
- Be realistic in its aspirations of what is achievable within the short and medium term.

How much have we achieved so far?

At the time of this conference the centre is making good progress towards achieving its communications objectives. It has produced two issues of its dual language magazine 'Insight' (one in UK and one in Ukraine) and distributed them world-wide. The third issue is being prepared. Three ICC international conferences have been held in Slavutych, near Chornobyl. These have attracted delegates from countries such as Austria, Japan, USA, UK Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine. The centre will soon have its own web site up and running. This will give information on the current status of Chornobyl and international efforts there, the capabilities of the Centre's Slavutych laboratories, the entrepreneurial opportunities in the town of Slavutych together with news about the Ukraine nuclear industry as a whole.

To develop as it wishes, the Centre is now adopting a more pro-active 'marketing' role to sell itself, to attract, encourage and 'make friends' with potential funding agents, and those contracting organisers who influence their decisions. By becoming self-sustaining the Centre can take more control over its destiny, rather than wait for others to decide its future direction and activities.

The communications team is also adopting a strategy aimed at becoming self-sustaining within two to three years. This will enable full-time dedicated communications professionals to be employed and secure strong ownership of the strategy.

Telling the world how it is

The world wants to know what is going at Chornobyl and ICC has many positive achievements to report. These achievements have significant implications both within the industry and for the wider population. But there are also many problems arising from the legacy of the Chornobyl accident that Ukraine cannot resolve alone. ICC has a central role to play, not only in co-ordinating international efforts but also in telling the world how it is.