

Parallel Session 20: Museums and Science Centres in the transmission of cultural diversity.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN MEDIA AND SCIENCE CENTRES :THE FLANDERS CASE

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Abstracts

Science centres are among the important actors in science communication. To fulfil their mission, they use different channels. Some of these, print and broadcasting are the core business of the media. To serve large audiences, the media are in search of content. Science centres - having content - look for large audiences. Science centres can deliver high-value content, a chance to physically meet the audience. Media can deliver efficient channels to the public. Technopolis has developed strategic partnerships with different types of media in Flanders :examples prove these to be very successful resulting in a real win-win-win (centre, media, public)

Key-words: science centres, media, popularisation

Text

Flanders has one science centre, Technopolis. It opened in 2000, and is already one of the international reference centres. Technopolis offers 260 hands-on exhibits, plus temporary exhibitions, shows, demos, an automatic theatre, all interactive and close to everyday life. Next to this Technopolis organises various outreach activities.

But how to reach the target groups?

Marketeers advise to pay attention to the 4P's: Product, Place, Prize and Promotion.

To product, place, prize and promotion, Technopolis adds a fifth P: Partnerships. In order to serve a large audience, the media search for content. While science centres have content, and search for a large audience. Both parties can cater to each other's needs. Science centres can deliver high-value content, an aura of trustworthiness, a place to physically meet the audience. The media can deliver an efficient channel towards the broad public. Both can offer each other a strong brand to be associated with. So why not become strategic partners?

In a well chosen partnership, the science centre finds a series of advantages: an instrument for product placement; a long term engagement with constant repetition of its message and editorial space in stead of advertising space. At the same time one must pay attention not to compromise on the content.

The arrangement is advantageous to the media too: they receive dependable, high quality content; tone up their image and credibility; get a location for

recording and broadcasting and get a physical location to organize events. But the public also wins : it is better served, in an integrated and consistent way. So a strategic partnership in science communication is a Win-Win-Win: both partners are better off, and the public gets better informed.

Technopolis has several of such strategic media partnerships. For instance with the national radio station Radio 1. Technopolis offers visibility and a location for live-programmes and special events for listeners, the radio station offers media space. For a popular radio programme where the public helps answering questions related to science and technology, Technopolis offers content and location, and is present in the programme in an editorial way. The hosts of the programme are godparents of the Technopolis hot-air balloon. When the producers of the radio show wanted to derive a book of it, they got the know-how of Technopolis, and its credibility, in exchange for visibility on the book cover and presence on the air. The book was an instant bestseller. The publisher of the book, Roularta, used a popular exhibit of Technopolis to enliven its stand at an important book fair, while Technopolis used this to 'edutain' the numerous visitors of the fair.

The TV show Hoe?Zo! (How's That? That's what!) is shot in Technopolis. Technopolis delivers scientific advise and some content; in return it receives prime time visibility and promotion (during trailers). The show has a market share of 42% and a rating of 8.5/10. When the show was looking for young co-hosts, Technopolis offered the location for the casting. With animation Technopolis made an event out of the casting. In return Technopolis got promotion on screen during the calls for talent, and a large number of young visitors during the resulting Hoe?Zo! day.

The children's television programme Curieuzeneuze (Nosey Parker) on everyday science was launched by Technopolis: a school class asks a question - e.g. why does hair turn grey? - and presents the answer, and their search for it, on TV. Technopolis delivers content, produces the video material and gets back visibility. From the start Curieuzeneuze was the most popular programme on the kids channel. In the meantime, science is promoted as interesting, research as rewarding.

A leading national newspaper, Het Nieuwsblad, made an exhibit with Technopolis: the visitor produces a personalised newspaper front page. Technopolis gets media space in the journal. The journal has a market share of 41%.

Two regional newspapers receive from Technopolis free scientific content for their Questions & Answers column. These newspapers have a market share of 30.5%.

A leading publisher of educational books, Kluwer, used input from Technopolis to enhance the appeal of a school book on technology. Technopolis got product placement, a good link into schools and another channel to deliver its popularising message.

Together with another publisher, Davidsfonds, Technopolis uses its popularisation and scientific know-how for co-editing of a youth encyclopaedia on communication; Technopolis again gets a novel channel and visibility.

The Flemish monthly science magazine Eos gets from Technopolis a location for its events. It offers media space, and free copies of the magazine for Technopolis visitors.

Another publishing company, Averbode, with a market share of 65% in school weeklies, gets from Technopolis content and a location for events; it gives editorial space in return. The same publishing group runs Kidcity, a leading website for kids. Technopolis brings in the content for the scientific part of the site, and it gets an electronic channel and an audience in return.

In all of the mentioned cases, both partners were better off. Technopolis always pays attention to the balance of offer and return, only partners with strong brands or market leaders and doesn't allow any compromise on the content. Finally the public gets better informed. Win-Win-Win, that's called.

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