



Practical Guidelines for CIVL/FAI Category 1 Competition Organisers Chapter 9

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9 Press, PR and Marketing Communications

9.1 Introduction

This can be an extremely important aspect of a successful competition. Good press coverage is viewed as a measure of success by many, including grant authorities, local councils, sponsors, sports councils, tourism agencies and FAI. FAI is committed to improving media exposure to our sports, long term. Improved media exposure is essential to encourage sponsorship of our events.

Ideally, a Communications, PR and Media Officer should be appointed to coordinate activities and ensure consistency of image and information across the various media. He should be well informed about the discipline, be a good communicator in English and/or the local language, and efficient at writing and sending out press releases (print and email) and handling enquiries promptly.

A Media Communications person at FAI is available to help Category 1 Competition Organisers. The FAI can help promote your event through its international network of airports media channels. If you intend to produce video footage of your event(s), either for a stand-alone production, or for supply to TV and digital broadcast agencies, the FAI can help with information on distribution rights etc. See chapter 9 Press, PR and Marketing Communications

The Communications Officer should also be involved in discussions concerning procedures in case of an incident. Information dissemination is an extremely important part of this procedure and can take a huge burden off the Competition Organiser and Meet/Safety Directors.

9.2 Media Plan

The media plan should provide for regular press coverage, starting at the time of the bid, then in the run up to, during and after the Practice Event and the Championships. Varying material should be prepared in English and in the local language.

9.2.1 Media types

Consider the requirements of the following media:

- Local & National newspapers, specialist national magazines, sports magazines/colour supplements
- National magazines from other countries, International specialist magazines
- Local, Regional & National radio stations
- Local, Regional & National tv channels. Note that broadcast media have special requirements

- Internet/web channels – especially sports channels and video websites. Plus links to websites of print media
- Social media – Facebook, twitter & blogs

It may be worth discussing opportunities with potential media partners, such as a leading local/regional newspaper, or a specialist magazine. It can lead to more coverage for the event, while the partner benefits from a certain level of exclusivity and promotion for its own branding. Competitors like to see their names and photos in print. Timely coverage can be displayed in the HQ for competition and the general public to view.

9.2.2 Material ideas

Press Pack: Consider preparing background information in the local language for regional and national newspapers, radio and tv. Airsports events are not always well known or understood, so basic explanatory articles are also useful. Include information on the positive impact of the event on the sport, the site, tourism, local economy etc. Add pilot profiles and photos, or links to where photos and video clips can be downloaded. Provide contact details and encourage them to attend the competitions, if possible. Distribute printed copies to local press and ensure all the documents are also available on the website.

Press Releases: Start producing these early, and then on a regular basis, and upload to the website. They are a useful way of keeping the media informed of progress and keeping the event in their minds. These can be angled to local or international/specialist press, as appropriate.

During the event, send email press releases of daily task results with website address for more details, photos, and upcoming events on the programme. Send reminder invitations for the prize-giving, and email the final results as soon as they become official, with photos.

Press Day: If there is much local/national media interest, consider inviting journalists to the site for the day some time prior to the start of the event. Plan ahead to provide a photo opportunities, meet local VIPs, pilots, and possibly offer tandem flights. Try to coincide the day with some newsworthy story (sponsorship deal, site improvements, pilot entries).

Pilot profiles: If you get early input to the online registration form before it is published, you can start gathering information with a few simple questions added to the form (how long flying/in comps, best position etc, online profile, photo etc)

Other material that might be useful includes: photo gallery (pilots, sites, in-flight shots), programme of events, links to videos, blogs etc.

Remember for Cat 1 events to send press releases (or links to them) to the FAI.

9.3 Logos & Titles

If an event logo has not already been developed, this should be done quickly. Remember to use the full title of the event and incorporate the FAI logo if possible. The event logo should be used consistently on all public/official documents, including the website. It is useful to create different sizes of the logo for use in various applications (letterheads, press communications, posters, promotional items, click through banners for partner websites, etc).

Obtain the electronic files of the official FAI logos from the FAI Office. Download the FAI Branding styleguide from: <http://www.fai.org/about-fai/fai-branding>. It is important that you use the correct FAI logo appropriately. FAI branding will add significant kudos to the image of your event. The FAI logo should be used whenever possible, and especially on the website, posters, stationery and other printed matter where the full title of the event is used.

Remember also that FAI maintains certain media and advertising rights over its FAI sanctioned airsports competitions.

9.4 Website & Social Media

Website: This is a key tool. As soon as the bid is accepted, you should ensure the website is operational and shows the dates of the Practice Event and the Championships, as a minimum. The competition website is an important communication tool, not just for pilots, but for sponsors and the media too. It is worth considering a local language version, especially if you expect grant aid, and support from local and regional authorities and local commerce. It is important to keep the website up to date, not only as preparations are under way, but on a daily basis during the competition.

During the competitions, it is worthwhile appointing someone to write a blog, as well as task/daily reports. Ensure links to pilot blogs, media partner websites etc, are in place. It is essential to keep the world informed of the progress of the competition.

Social media: If you have someone experienced in running social media tools, such as Facebook, it can be a useful means of communicating with pilots and the flying community generally.

9.5 Press Liaison

It is important to have a plan in place for dealing with the press wishing to attend the event, particularly at launch or goal fields, for example. It is advisable to have a dedicated Press Officer to escort film crews and photographers. The Press Officer should speak the language of the press they are escorting. They should understand the competition set up, be able to provide background information, introduce them to appropriate people (pilots, organisers, VIPs) as well as ensure the safety of both the press people and competitors. It is important that competitors are not disturbed by their presence on launch, for example. Ensure the press are looked after in terms of accommodation, food/refreshments, transport (they may have a lot of equipment), and working facilities (room with internet access). If there are a number of press, photographers, cameramen and assistants to cater for, consider the budget implications and alert the Competition Organiser accordingly.

If news of the event starts to attract a lot of press attention, it may be worth considering setting up a press accreditation package. This helps the organising team keep track of how many journalists, cameramen and photographers to expect, who they are producing material for, and the logistics of them all being on site at the same time. It also ensures that you have bona fide journalists attending, and that you have a means of checking back later to see what publicity has been generated.

Press accreditation is important if there is restricted access at launch or in goal fields, or at the Accuracy Target, or if you have media partners that have negotiated some exclusivity of coverage.

9.5.1 Public Relations

Similarly, you should have a policy in place if members of the public wish to observe the event from the launch or goal field/target, especially if these are public rights of way. Some competitions and venues are more 'spectator-friendly' than others. Consider creating a secure, enclosed area for spectators that gives them a good view of proceedings, but without allowing them to get in the way of competitors or organisers, or potentially creating a safety hazard. If spectators are going to be encouraged, some thought should be given to facilities (proximity of toilets, shade, refreshments).

Ensure posters and programmes that are displayed to the public state clearly times and access for spectators. The local Tourist Office may be able to help handle enquiries from the general public.

9.6 Creating a Media/Spectator Friendly Event

There are a host of mechanisms that can be developed to help create a media and spectator-friendly event. Paragliding Accuracy and Aerobatics have a natural focus, but even for cross country competitions can be made attractive. Live tracking is an obvious start point. Ensure the link to the website display is widely distributed. Taking video footage of the launch and pilots arriving at goal can be swiftly edited after the task to create short videos of the day's task. Some sort of commentary can work well too. Similarly, photographs can be posted on websites to make attractive slide shows.

For Paragliding Accuracy, video footage of landings is mandatory, and this can be edited at the end of the day to show highlights. A commentator at the target works well, particularly if he has access to brief pilot profiles. Displaying the scores on a large screen can also be effective.

For any event, large screens could be installed in the HQ or at a nearby bar, restaurant or outside venue. These could take live feed from the target or the Live Tracking/Live Leader Board, or play videos of the highlights later.

Interactive activities involving the local community and/or general public can be useful for generating interest and support. Set up a poster competition among the children from local schools, then display the posters at the HQ or other local exhibition area. Set up a small exhibition on the theme of hang gliding or paragliding, with posters, photos, memorabilia, souvenirs, trade stands, kites etc. Print and distribute widely posters advertising the event. Local shopkeepers can display them to show support and welcome to the pilots. Decorate the town with bunting and flags.

Souvenirs can be a useful source of additional revenue to help fund extra social events for pilots, for example. Consider producing tee-shirts that can be purchased by spectators as well as friends and family of the competitors. They could be the same design as the competition shirts, or possibly the same design on a different colour so that competitors can be differentiated. Other promotional items such as postcards, stickers, mugs, baseball caps, pens etc, may also be popular. The Tourist Office may be able to advise and suggest points of sale.

9.6.1 Media archive

It is recommended to create a media archive, starting as early as the bid process, and continuing right through the Practice Event and the Championships, to provide a complete record of the publicity and promotional opportunities that the event presented.

Keep a folder of cuttings from newspapers and magazines, as well as a list of links to websites, articles, video clips, photo archives, blogs and other material, that have appeared on the internet. File copies of Press Releases. Keep examples of all promotional items produced. Eventually, after the event, a copy of the media archive should be sent to the FAI Office for their archives.

The media archive can provide a useful reference for showing to sponsors and grant authorities, to demonstrate the publicity gained for the event, and potentially for subsequent requests for funds for other events.

9.6.2 Media Rights & Sponsorship

If you have commercial sponsors, you should download the following document (<http://www.fai.org/component/phocadownload/category/753-branding?download=2939:fairulesadvertisingv1-3>) to understand how best to provide advertising opportunities for sponsors while protecting the interests of all parties and ensuring the impartiality of the organisers and the sportsmanship of competitors.

The Competition Organiser should also understand the issues surrounding Media Rights to FAI Events. Essentially, if you are negotiating with a film company to provide video coverage of the event, make sure that it is contractually agreed that you AND the FAI have rights to the final product, to use it for promotional purposes. If in doubt, check with FAI Secretariat before signing any contract or agreement.

9.6.3 In case of an incident

The Communications, PR & Press Officer has an important role to play in case of an incident. It is essential that correct and appropriate information is issued, or is available, as soon as possible after an incident. The contact details of someone authorised to talk to the press on behalf of the Competition Organiser (if he is not available) must be included also.

It is advisable to prepare some information in advance, 'just in case', as the PR Officer may have to react extremely rapidly at a stressful time. See Chapter 8 for more details.