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What about at local level ? The numerous facets of local communication

Expert Speaker :

Bruno COHEN-BACRIE, Head of communication in the town of Echirolles, and author of several books about local authorities' communication.

Participating Experts :

Bernadette BOURZAI, European Mp.

Pascale CARTEGNIÉ, Joint Head of communication at the Aisne General Council.

Jean-Baptiste MASSE, Collaborator at LEADER + and the Brenne Regional Council.

Béatrice OUIN, Former Head of communication at the Lot and Garonne General Council, member of the European economic and social committee (CESE).

Chairman :

Régis DE CLOSETS, newsreader, journalist- reporter, and collaborator at Figaro and Paris Match.

As an introduction to his analysis Bruno Cohen-Bacrie gave the results of a Cap'Com study, carried out in 2003 by the TMO-Regions institute. This study was based on the links between a territory's image and its economic development.

90% of the people questioned thought that a territory's image has an impact on the development of businesses.

91% believed that this image plays a part in attracting new businesses.

73% of those questioned thought that a territory's image effects its economic development.

These statistics illustrate the importance image has on a territory : "Apart from developing communication strategies, local authorities are also interested in marketing their territory. The promotion of territories is a strategic method which gives them a powerful boost". The media encourages competition between territories, by publishing an annual list of the regions which offer the best living conditions.

Among all the political strategies, territorial communication is the most recent. Before 1970, communication services did not exist. Territorial communication developed in response to various changes : the decentralisation of regions, the growing importance of political propaganda and the reconstruction of territories. Originally communication strategies promoted a region as a product : "This traditional approach was disappointing" explained Bruno Cohen-Bacrie. Contrastingly the recent trend is to simplify promotions and opt for an approach based on a better knowledge of the concerned territory : "the countryside reflects the identity of its inhabitants, motivated by a common plight". Lastly, advertising methods have been modernised, as demonstrated in City magazines, a newspaper replication, as well as the explosion of advertising campaigns on the web.



Four participants who used different communication strategies resume the reasons for their success.

In order to make the Lot and Garonne a better known region, Béatrice Ouin launched an invitation to tender to various advertising agencies. They chose a shock campaign aimed at those living in cities, the mysterious slogan read - "you have fifteen days to leave the city" and it gave a telephone number.

Projection of the advertising campaign

The results surpassed original expectations :

■ The "Maison d'Aquitaine" was submerged by queries, with more than 200 telephone calls per hour instead of 200 calls per day.

■ An overall list of 5000 contacts was made up. The project leader who was in charge of the campaign's aftermath, maintained links with 400 people.

■ The Lot and Garonne experienced an 18% growth in the take over of businesses. This activity had a spiralling effect because local people then decided to set up business themselves.

For Pascale Cartegnie the need to communicate was inevitable. In 2003 her region came last in the famous listing of regions ; L'Aisne had to change its image. The hotel network "Center parcs" who intended to create a complex, refused to use the region's name because of the similarity in the pronunciation of "Aisne" and "haine". The region turned this weakness into a strong point in their advertising campaign by using the word "Aisne" in English expressions. It was such a success that "Center parcs" finally opted for the department's name. They even created an Internet site www.aisneglish.com encouraging inhabitants to learn English.

Although advertising campaigns are effective, they often require a substantial budget. Bernadette Bourzai illustrated this during her resume ; a communication project can also be envisaged without the use of the mass media. Over the past ten years at European level, the LEADER programme has opted for communication between the participating regions. " LEADER supports projects for the development of rural areas which aim to boost isolated regions and create jobs".

The Côtes d'Armor region benefited from the support of the LEADER+ partnership scheme, which in 2005 financed their project of a TV web site : "This citizen's television was based on the participation of inhabitants, giving everyone a chance to express themselves", declared Jean-Baptiste MASSE. The local television is a socially based communication method which has helped to promote the region and its heritage, especially the Brenne Nature Park.

Presentation of the TV Web site

Béatrice Bourzai concluded "we are nearly at the fifth generation of people involved in programmes, GAL(Local Action Groups) have multiplied". The aim of these organisations is to support partnerships with the countryside and to develop a network of rural territories. In Europe there are at present 896 working GAL groups, 140 of them in France.