

Bounceology

The Science and Art of Bouncing in Business and Life



PR Squabbles, Take the High Road!

Study

On March 6, 2009 when then White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs was responding to President Obama's squabbles with radio host Rush Limbaugh the Press Secretary said that he "doesn't even own a radio!" The radio industry was frustrated. After all, 93% of citizens in the United States listen to the radio. Most homes have 2-5 radios, including 1-3 radios in their driveways. US consumers use the radio every day!

Recommend

The HD Digital Radio Alliance sprang into action - they sent Gibbs a new radio. If the White House is really without a radio, this is an easy problem to solve.

Activate

The HD Radio Alliance sent Mr. Gibbs a Sony XDR-S10HDiP; featuring iTunes Tagging, HD Radio capability and an iPod dock for Gibbs' perusal. The Alliance indicated in a media alert to trade publications, "We're delighted to welcome the White House to this important digital upgrade," the Alliance's president, Diane Warren, said as part of the announcement, "Now, they can listen to the President's Weekly Radio Address in crystal clear HD digital sound and find exciting new HD2 stations only available on HD Radio in Washington, DC." Gibbs and the President could even use the iTunes Tagging HD Radio feature to "tag" a song they like on the radio for future purchase on iTunes.

Results

The press reported on the gift. The White House took the bait. They responded graciously admitting that they did listen to the radio. More to the point, it was fun and useful to share the plan inside the industry to counteract other organizations that were reacting in anger. The industry press reported the stunt with humor! The Press Secretary could not keep the radio due to the gift rules; however, the Alliance received a delightful thank you note with the return of the HD Radio! Michele Clark, then with Brainerd Communicators, now with Waggener Edstrom Worldwide, and her team executed flawlessly!

Bounce this way...

(Useful Ideas)

It isn't always the best idea to fight fire with fire, or even humor. This outline suggests fact checking and creative brainstorming to solve a problem rather than reacting to public announcements. Consider these steps should you have a situation in the public forum --- and make sure you coach your executives who are spokespeople to avoid negative comments about any one product (especially unnecessarily) where an entire industry could get riled.

- 1 Get the facts and make sure you completely understand what has been said and done before acting on anything – did they really say what was reported?
- 2 Think CREATIVELY, determine how to react in the most interesting, inventive and gracious way to make your point and defend your product
- 3 Think tactically, how can you execute your plan quickly – for example we investigated the White House delivery rules and discovered that a couriered gift would get to the West Wing offices much faster through appropriate security than a regular postal delivery
- 4 Move on your idea quickly and take creative action to make the delivery of the item interesting to the recipient - for example we also included a transcript of Gibb's statement so he and his staff would make a connection about what he said and how it related to the radio
- 5 Release a "media alert" about your action to showcase the innovation without being contrary
- 6 Communicate to your stakeholders about your unique solution and action ... and eventually the result
- 7 Try to reconnect to the press about the outcome if the outcome is good and interesting – for example we were able to get the HD Radio featured in gift guides with text saying "the same HD radio given to the White House Press Secretary".

Bounce SHOW and TELL...

(Examples of this work)

