

The do's and don'ts of event PR

 By [Maria Muller](#)

8 Aug 2013

I recently spoke to a few clients and prospects about their presence at the upcoming AfricaCom industry event, held annually in Cape Town, South Africa and Africa's largest communications congress and exhibition.

Not surprisingly, a number of these companies told me that they were now solely focusing on IBC - the premier International Broadcasting Convention with over 1,400 exhibitors taking place in September in Amsterdam. With IBC only a few weeks away, AfricaCom was not yet really on their marketing radars.

From one event to the next

This may make sense from a marketing workload point of view, but from a PR standpoint it is a risky move. By the end of the September, when the madness that is IBC has calmed down, AfricaCom will be less than two months away.

From previous experience I know that many companies struggle to dive straight into AfricaCom when they have just finished IBC, however, by September and certainly early October there will be a number of pressing deadlines from publications covering the African event and pre-show previews.

I have also spoken to a number of journalists in the UK and South Africa, who have almost unanimously informed me that they mainly will be attending AfricaCom to meet with the big players and attend the conferences. To meet with smaller vendors is not very high on their priority lists, as they can probably do so at most other times of the year.

Most companies still prefer to keep their best news stories for trade shows and will probably choose to release them over the wire during AfricaCom. This is another very risky move as they will once again be competing with the bigger and better known players for editorial attention. Not to mention the fact that sending out a press release rarely results in coverage in a tier one publication.

Engage before

Many companies first attend industry events such as AfricaCom when they are looking to break into new markets. However, while it is important for brand awareness and customer engagements to have a stand at the event, it can be hard to get face time with attending press.

A trade show is probably not the right place to start building relationships with key press, as they are probably under huge pressure to report back on the day's major news stories and conference highlights, and will not be able to give you quality

time and attention.

I would therefore suggest that it makes much more sense to engage with the press in the weeks leading up to AfricaCom. By sharing the company's news and partnership announcements with the press ahead of the event, you will have a greater chance of achieving editorial coverage which could then be shared with customers and prospects. It could in fact result in more customer meetings at the event itself.

ABOUT MARIA MULLER

Purple Word Box was founded by Maria Joubert - a high-tech PR specialist with more than 15 years' experience. Born and raised a Saffa, Maria moved to the UK in 2002.

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