The Present and Future of Sport Communication: A Roundtable Discussion

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The concepts of communication run the gamut of sport management topics, both in the classroom and the research arena. Every area of sport management, from ethics to governance to leadership to sales, requires its adherents and observers to possess some degree of effectiveness in communicating ideas, concepts, and goals.

More specifically, the field of sport communication occupies an important area of the sport industry, acting as the conduit for interaction between sport organizations and their publics. With the ever-increasing access of the public to the Internet and sport-related web sites, athletes, teams, leagues, organizations, and governing bodies have had to place a greater premium on effective means of communication, and on hiring well-trained sport communication workers to help them achieve these goals (Pedersen, Miloch, & Laucella, 2007). Similarly, the importance of well-mediated communication between sport entities and the media organizations that cover them has increased (Stoldt, Dittmore, & Branvold, 2006).

These elements, along with other important factors, help to comprise the Strategic Sport Communication Model (SSCM), a theoretical construct which provides both scholars and practitioners a guide to the sport communication process (Pedersen, Miloch, & Laucella, 2007). The SSCM, which accounts for personal and organizational sport communication, sport mass media, and sport communication services and support, illustrates how the sport communication is unique, yet also influenced by areas as diverse as applied communication, marketing, public address, communication theory, and many other disciplines and perspectives.

In the academic world, sport communication is a young discipline, but one that is establishing itself as both an in-demand area of major study and a worthy subject of scholarly inquiry. Some universities and colleges now offer course or major specialization in sport communication, including courses dealing with information systems, media and public relations, and new media technologies. Publications focusing on sport communication-related issues have appeared in nearly every major sport management and marketing journal, and the recent establishment of the International Journal of Sport Communication has provided scholars a flagship venue in which to publish sport communication-related scholarship. Scholarly work focusing on sport communication has covered a great many areas, including advertising (Cianfrone et al., 2008; Trail, Kwon, & Anderson, 2009), discourse analysis (Mean & Kassing, 2008), international issues (Galily, 2008; Osborne & Coombs, 2009; Vivier, Monier, & Rose, 2008; Xiao & Eagleman, 2008), internet and new media factors (Clavio, 2008; Dittmore, Stoldt, & Greenwell, 2008; Sanderson, 2008), print media issues (Hardin, Zhong, & Whiteside, 2009; Kian & Hardin, 2009; Vincent & Crossman, 2008), sponsorship and branding (Fortunato, 2008; Mueller & Roberts, 2008; Pichot, Tribou, & O'Reilly, 2008), and many more areas.

The purpose of this roundtable discussion is twofold. First, this roundtable will examine the present state of sport communication in both academic and practical terms. Each of the participants in the roundtable is currently involved in some aspect of sport communication at the university level, and many have prior industry experience as workers in sport communication. All have produced scholarly works dealing directly with sport communication-related issues. The purpose of this part of the roundtable is to educate and inform colleagues and doctoral students on the specific elements of sport communication, how those elements serve today's undergraduate and graduate students, and how those elements fit into a standard sport management curriculum. Furthermore, concepts of research and scholarship in sport communication will be discussed, including opportunities for publication, grants, and connections with other existent sport management research topics.
Second, the roundtable will support the discussion of future developments in the field of sport communication. Areas discussed will include the culture of sport communication, the continued delineation between marketing/promotions and communication, the growth of sport communication as a research area, and effective means of teaching sport communication to students, including the development of sport communication classes and the marketing of those classes to college students. Also discussed will be the continued integration of new media into the sport management sphere, and the need for emerging scholars and teachers in sport communication.