

Hospitality comms needs humility and empathy in 2021

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Humility and empathy. In the past, these words were not part of the hospitality publicist’s vernacular. For people in travel and hospitality comms, conversations were typically about “best of the best” accolades. But the pandemic and the perception of travel has changed how publicists should approach their role as storytellers. For example, take hotels. Where before, messaging used to speak about front-of-house dazzle, publicists now communicate humble back-of-house issues such as health and safety policies to boost consumer confidence.

Whoever thought sanitization would be sexy?

As I write this, travel is still impossible for many. And while I don't know when we'll be able to resume vacation planning, here's what I do know: People will always look to travel for inspiration.

Therefore, it's essential to maintain visibility while being mindful of the public's diverse perspectives on the travel experience, and this can be achieved by championing an unwavering belief in travel above any calls to action. Publicists must strike the right tone between the inspirational and the informational, the empathetic and the persuasive, the humble and the whimsical.

Travel outreach also needs to recognize the media's changing needs. For example, has a journalist maintained their "I'll go anywhere at any time" perspective? Proactively address any concerns.

Also, remember there are fewer reporters covering more beats than ever. So go back to the core of our work — relationships — and distribute astutely targeted pitches to the handful (maybe just one) of journalists you know will jump on the story. Also, prioritize journalists with extensive social engagement.

In a time when travel companies are working with dwindling marketing budgets, publicists play a crucial crisis role in maintaining visibility by landing valuable exposure on trusted editorial pages.

Do your part by being humble — not every journalist wants your message — and showing empathy. Understand that not everyone can or will want to travel right now. But let them know that when they're ready, your client will be there with open arms.

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