



CAMPAIGNS: Watergate Plus 30 gains viewers with PBS' revealing ANR

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Campaign: "Watergate Plus 30" ANR release
Time frame: July 23-30, 2003
Budget: \$3,000 (ANR function)

This past summer, PBS' media relations department hired Kelly & Salerno Communications (KSC) to do promotional media relations for a Watergate anniversary retrospective documentary called *Watergate Plus 30: Shadow of History*. Greenwich, CT-based KSC planned to center stories around the history of the event and its meaningful relationship with PBS. (The public broadcaster was the only station to air the hearings in their entirety every day).

However, at the end of production, an important discovery was brought to light: In his interview for the film, Watergate co-conspirator Jeb Magruder alleged that former President Richard Nixon personally ordered the hotel break-in, information that was sure to cause an avalanche of media attention.

"Nobody had any idea that this information was going to come to light," KSC principal Colby Kelly says. "It wasn't the goal of the documentary. Ten days before its premiere, we had to totally revise our strategy."

Strategy

"We wanted to link the news of the revelation closely to the documentary," Kelly explains, "and we wanted use it to create buzz and awareness in watching the program."

Releasing the story exclusively and supporting it with an audio news release (ANR) was the decided course of action, with the news reaching a news-cycle peak on Monday and driving viewers to the Wednesday-night airing of the documentary. They subcontracted the ANR to News Generation, a radio media relations firm.

"[KSC] knew that it was going to break, and instead of doing interviews, they chose ANRs because they could package it in advance," says Lynn Medcalf, EVP and cofounder of News Generation. "In this circumstance, they wanted to use radio because they could really get the story out there quickly."

Tactics

"Timing was a critical issue," Kelly says. "The optimal strategy was to give it to *The [Washington] Post* for the Sunday paper exclusively." After the paper came out on Sunday, KSC released the story to the AP. Because they knew that newspapers would print the AP stories on Monday, they planned for the ANR to be

available on Sunday and Monday, with a sound bite directly from Magruder's testimony in the documentary.

"We had three people pitching the ANR, and got it out in one morning," Medcalf says, noting that they reached about 100 stations. "Many people [at radio stations] knew about the story, and were working on it."

The ANR was pitched to the AP first, then the national networks, including CNN, ABC, American Urban Radio Network, and Metro Source. The News Generation team posted the ANR on its website, and made programmers aware that it was available for use.

In addition, Jeb Magruder came to New York to appear on *Today*, CNN, and MSNBC.

Results

"What was supposed to be a historical documentary became a news documentary," Kelly says. "The impact was terrific in terms of media relations."

According to Medcalf, the Magruder ANR was the company's best-performing one all year. Airing nationally, it hit the number-one news stations in New York, LA, Chicago, Philadelphia, Dallas, Washington, DC, and Pittsburgh. According to Arbitron ratings, the ANR received 27,000 airings, many occurring multiple times over a 24-hour period on July 28 and 29.

It is estimated that the ANR reached 49.7 million listeners nationally, attributing the news to the PBS documentary. According to NTI Ratings, the program earned a 2.2HH rating, and 6.5 million people watched some portion of the program.

Future

While the *Watergate Plus 30* campaign has ended, the parties involved have solidified a relationship that will likely be used in the future.