The role of brand and reputation management, marketing and crisis communication in meeting the challenges facing modern National Statistics Organisations and other International Statistics Agencies.

Summary

Introduction

The main function of National Statistical Offices and other International Statistical agencies is to collect and analyse data and publish statistics that provide insight into our societies and opportunities for international comparison. However, if there is no awareness of our statistics or their application in our societies then there is essentially no purpose to our producing them.

It is widely accepted that the capacity for both information and disinformation to spread globally at a rapid pace, has had a profound impact on the production of Official Statistics. Independent, robust, ethically produced statistics, as critically important as they have ever been, are challenged by the deluge of alternative data sources, as well as those actively seeking to undermine our societies through disinformation. In addition to providing high quality, timely and relevant statistics and ensuring access and understanding, NSO's now have an additional responsibility to amplify their outputs above the 'noise' of the information deluge and highlight the differentiators that make Official Statistics a trusted and 'go to' brand.

Over the last two years a CES Task Force has been considering the issue of how to measure the value of official statistics and how to communicate this value to both users and the wider public. The inherent value of Official Statistics is ultimately decided by users. They will attach value to what is relevant, timely and meets their needs.

In addition, there is ongoing discussion and work across the international statistical system, on combatting disinformation and the active attempts of those who use it to manipulate and destabilise our societies. This work includes defining what disinformation is and identifying tools and practices which can help to combat its influence.

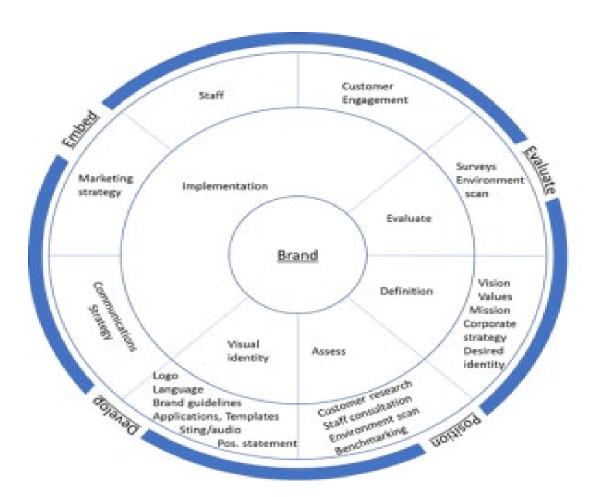In summary, two of the key challenges facing the Official Statistics are

- Building awareness of and trust in, our reputation and our products, their quality, relevance and importance in the information age
- Developing strategies as providers of independent, objective statistics to combat the disinformation

Meeting these challenges requires a multi-dimensional, multi-layered response from NSO's. One key strategic asset is a well-developed, well-managed brand and reputation. Brand is the vehicle through which NSO's can build awareness of outputs, build relationships with users and create a link or association with the organisation values. A brand must tell the story or paint a picture of your organisation. In the case of NSO's this needs to be the story of trustworthy, independent information and a secure repository for citizens' or businesses' personal data. In some cases, it may also need to be the story of an exciting, innovative and important place to work.

This would seem to be a lot of weight to place on a logo or 'look and feel' of an organisation. However, 'brand' is a much broader concept than this. It is the personality of the organisation. It incorporates the values, the tone of voice, the messaging and generally how the organisation presents itself to the outside world. While the foundation of statistical organisations may be high-quality, relevant statistics, brand and reputation is how the outside world perceives them and makes decisions about their value and relevance.

Fig. 1

This diagram outlines the elements involved in brand development and the importance of ensuring that the Values and Identity of the organisation are linked closely with how it is presented to the outside world. The 'value' of Official Statistics is largely determined by users/customers. However, brand ensures that the link between the organisation and that 'value' is embedded in the consciousness.

Elements of Brand Development and Maintenance

As outlined in the figure, positioning, developing, embedding and evaluating the brand, involves multiple elements including customer consultation, staff engagement and communication and marketing strategies.

This document provides some guidance, tools and strategies relating to developing a brand, building awareness and trust in the brand, and the ongoing management of brand and reputation including through crisis situations. It includes guidelines for initial brand development and consistency,

opportunities for education and awareness, and developing social media and digital marketing strategies.

Chapter 1 – Developing, Building and Maintaining a Brand

Brand Development

The most basic element of a brand is a logo and look and feel that is associated with the outputs of the organisation. Most NSO's already have logo's and a look and feel that users associate with their outputs. This document does not intend to go into too much detail on this process. However, all organisations should periodically review the look and feel of a brand and ensure that it still reflects the values and personality of the organisation and still tells the story of the NSO. Where a brand is being renewed of refreshed, there are several steps to consider

- A brand or rebrand is a major strategic decision. A broadly-based consultation process (management, staff, users) will ensure that the brand reflects the values and identity of the organisation
- Once a new brand has been developed and agreed, an implementation strategy is critical to ensure that the new brand is launched effectively and any transition period between old and new is kept to a minimum. A high-profile event or product which is guaranteed a high level of attention and media coverage can be a good vehicle for a brand launch
- Building familiarity with and awareness of your brand requires consistent use of the logo, as well as of fonts and tone of voice. The quality of products carrying the brand or logo will reflect on the reputation of the NSO. All areas have a responsibility to ensure that their outputs reflect this.

Building brand awareness and trust.

The key to any successful brand is a reliable, high quality product or service that meets the needs of consumers. Some key selling points or differentiators for producers of Official Statistics are the internationally agreed standards and methodologies applies to their outputs. However, these concepts can appear somewhat intangible to users, unless the outputs are of practical use to them. The function of brand management through communication and marketing, is to promote the quality and advantages of outputs, but also to listen to users and ensure that they find practical value in those outputs. For example, a high-end, high-spec executive vehicle may be a high-quality product however it does meet the needs of someone whose priorities are a vehicle that is highly fuel efficient and economic. The key to building a positive association with the brand of Official Statistics or individual NSO's, lies where the quality of the outputs intersects with the needs of users. The function of marketing and communication is to identify opportunities to promote these positive intersections through

- Customer interaction – E.g. Users surveys, focus groups, feedback channels, customer consultations etc.

- Education & Awareness – E.g. Product promotion, user support, events and conferences, data literacy projects etc
- Targeted communication & marketing of specific topics e.g. Importance of participation in surveys, value of specific outputs, promotion of Census
- Highlighting Misinformation

There are some key strategic areas through which the communication and marketing activities are channelled

- Website communication strategies
- Social media strategy
- Digital Marketing Strategy
- Staff as Brand Ambassadors

Chapter 2 -   Branding & Marketing Activities

Customer Interaction

Every interaction with users or the wider public is an opportunity to present the values, professionalism, innovation or importance of Official Statistics.

Increasing dialogue with users plays a crucial role in strengthening brand reputation and improving one's credibility and this sometimes represents a much more powerful conversion tool than advertising.

People today often ignore the messages they receive because they are overwhelmed by a flood of communications and find it difficult to identify those that really interest them. It therefore becomes essential to better engage users by listening their specific requests to be able to provide tailored answers for an immediate and concrete feedback to their questions.

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the need and appetite for products that are as close to real time data as possible.

The traditional methods of obtaining customer feedback through surveys, focus groups and personal relationships with users continue to provide valuable insight into customer needs and preferences. However, the growth of digital technology means that much of the interaction between users and NSO's happens remotely or using machine to machine communication. Google searches or API downloads are a continuously growing factor in how users interact with NSO's. The use of digital tools such as Google analytics, media monitoring, social media monitoring etc. is a key element of monitoring user preferences and behaviour. The insights provide opportunities for understanding and meeting user needs. The capacity for real time feedback also provides opportunities for immediate adjustment in the case of digital communication especially.

Educational outreach programmes, Seminars, Conferences etc.

 A key component of building brand awareness and reputation is reaching new audiences and creating positive associations through engagement with various relevant communities. This type of engagement is outside of the usual communication and dissemination activities associated with statistical outputs. The purpose and type of engagement can vary depending on the audience and it is important to consider this when deciding how and when to engage using your brand. Data literacy and user training projects are an example of activities that can build positive brand associations and increased awareness.

Audience Segmentation

As is the case when developing statistical outputs, it is important to understand your audience when engaging in brand promotion activities. The overall purpose is to raise awareness and create positive associations with Official Statistics in general and your organisation in particular. The activity and tone of the engagement will depend on the audience segment being targeted. Some examples of target audiences could be

- Students (Second and Third Level)
- Journalists and Media Organisations
- Government Employees and organisations
- Non-government organisations and community groups
- Current and prospective employees
- Business
- Academia

The opportunities for engagement with these disparate groups and the vehicles used to promote your brand will vary considerably. The desired outcome from the engagement will also vary. For example, with Government or NGOs the purpose could be to highlight the value of Official Statistics in supporting the decision-making process, whereas for students it could be to show them how the data we collect tells a story about some aspect of their lives. The key message remains the value of the brand and its outputs, however the tone and delivery of that message will be very different.

Raising awareness and Education

Statistical outputs are the cornerstone of official statistics and the flagship brand carrier for NSO's. However, they have limited capacity to grow audiences for official statistics unless organisations actively engage in building awareness and educating audiences. This is not just about improving the quality and clarity of communication (though this is obviously important). It is also about being a presence where audiences and potential audiences are and building familiarity with who you are and positive associations with your organisation and the people who work there.

- Student competitions and hackathons that require engagement with official statistics and attendance at Science Fairs and Exhibitions are good opportunities to introduce young audiences to the concepts of official statistics in a light-hearted and interesting way. This could be your first opportunity to engage with this audience, so it is important that tone is engaging, accessible and interesting. This should be reflected in the activities, the statistical material and the staff who are involved in this work.
- Trade and Employment Exhibitions can provide other opportunities to position your brand as a support to business or an attractive employment opportunity. As with the student audience it is important that the audience here takes away positive associations with the brand and its value. The material used should be relevant and have practical value to the likely attendance at the event. Staff who are representing the organisation should be well-briefed, well-presented and should be comfortable with engaging with the exhibition audience in a manner that is appropriate for that audience.
- Conferences and Seminars are another opportunity to present the NSO or Official Statistics brand to a broader audience. While in many cases this audience my already be aware of the

brand, there may be opportunities to present a new aspect of the work of the organisation, highlight the innovation taking place within your organisation or provide an example of how Official Statistics can be of value in the particular area of interest. Employees representing NSO's at these events should be aware that they are essentially brand carriers and their presentation, engagement and behaviour should reflect this.

Promotion activities and brand carrying merchandise

Activities such as sponsorship of prizes or giveaways of branded material like T-shirts, pens and promotional literature provide excellent opportunities to build brand familiarity and generate positive associations. Sponsorship opportunities should be considered in the context of how they are aligned with the values of both the organisation and official statistics.

When deciding on the types and volumes of merchandise consideration should be given to sustainability and the environmental impact. As well as the ethical considerations, there is the risk of negative associations for the brand if it seen to be contributing to environmentally damaging practices.

Targeted Communication and Campaigns

On occasions when NSO's are promoting a particular activity or encouraging a specific action from the public they may run an information or marketing campaign designed to reach a target audience or elicit a specific response. Examples include;

- Census Publicity
- Promoting the importance of responding to Household Surveys
- Staff Recruitment Campaigns

While these campaigns have a specific purpose, they are also an opportunity to promote the brand and create a positive association through the language, visuals and messages used. It is important to ensure that any such campaign is aligned to the values of the organisation and reflects the brand in a way that is consistent with this. For example, a Census publicity campaign that depicts only one sector of a population risks excluding those who do not see themselves reflected in the campaign. This could not only impact on the census response but create a sense that the brand is not about or interested in those who are not represented. This is counter to the values of insight and access of all which underpins Official Statistics.

Market research or testing can be a valuable tool when undertaking these campaigns which can often involve considerable resources and expense. It can provide useful insight to see how the language and messaging of the campaign resonates with the public prior to launch. Sometimes small adjustments can have a big impact on the willingness of the public to engage with the specific aims of the campaign.

Highlighting Disinformation

The digital age continues to facilitate the rapid spread of vast amounts of information and opinion globally. Distinguishing fact from opinion and methodologically sound from poor quality data has become increasingly difficult. In addition, a phenomenon has emerged in recent years of disinformation being deliberately distributed and targeted at the population with the aim of destabilising societies and influencing the outcome of elections or referenda.

This raises new questions for NSO's What attitude should they take on, how to handle this new phenomenon? What is disinformation (and what not), when does it enter the realm of official statistics; what works in handling disinformation and what not?

This is currently the topic of much international discussion and there may be an emerging consensus on how it can be dealt with. In the meantime, it is important for NSO's to consider their own positions in relation to handling disinformation. A strong brand and reputation for independence and trustworthiness can be a powerful weapon in the fight against disinformation. However, if it is essential to ensure that the NSO is seen to maintain its independence and not become engaged on one side or the other of a political or societal debate. Defining when and how to become involved is key to maintaining the integrity of your brand. However, it is important to have a crisis communication strategy which ensures that the agency is ready to respond, should there be a disinformation campaign.

Chapter 3 -Tools and Channels for Building and Maintaining Brand and Reputation.

Introduction

The digital environment is where most citizens will encounter both the NSO as a brand and the information and data it provides. It is also increasingly likely to be where they provide information and engage as prospective employees. It is important that the tools and channels through which NSO's engage with the public promote the brand and strongly reinforce the values of the organization. The values of independence, integrity, trustworthiness and relevance should be clearly communicated at any point where the organisation is intersecting with the public. Some of the key strategic intersection points are;

- Website
- Social Media
- Digital Marketing Campaign
- Staff as Brand Ambassadors

Website Communication

The organisation's website is the most frequently used channel to access information and services provided by NSO's. In many ways it represents the 'shop window' through which the NSO, its brand and values are displayed. As the first point of contact it is important that the website provides a positive user experience and highlights the quality and accessibility of the information available. The signposting and language should be clear and unambiguous. It should be easy to navigate between different sections of the website and the processes for finding relevant information should be accessible for a diverse audience and easily identified. It can be easy to fall into the trap of viewing the website as a repository for the information published by the NSO, whereas it is often an opportunity to interact with users and build brand awareness. A poor experience with a website can create negative brand associations and impact on the users' decision to engage again.

From this perspective, it is essential that websites evolve towards a multichannel portal, a platform for communication that facilitates access to content by providing various tools.

A multichannel portal responds directly to users by addressing their needs in a way that takes account of their various levels of expertise as well as familiarity with the tools and channels through which the NSO's invite them to engage. This approach provides opportunities for a richer experience both for the user and the NSO.

Included here are some recommendations for developing a web communication strategy aimed at promoting better user engagement. It is essential to start from the users' needs and this means investigating through user research activities (such as web analytics or conducting interviews and focus groups) in order to discover how the users avail of the system and making sure that all the features are designed around their needs and capacity.

It is important to consider the following: *How traffic is coming to your website?* Services must be designed around citizens' needs, *Key messages and information and User Feedback and Metrics*

How traffic is coming to your website?

While some users may come through the 'front door' of your website homepage, many will be referred through search engines or social media platforms and may arrive directly to a landing page related to their area of interest. It is important to ensure that all pages have clear signposting and labelling so that users understand where they are in the site and are made aware of links to other relevant information in a clear manner.

Services must be designed around users' needs

Services must be designed around users' needs. Organisations can sometimes design tools or processes on their website based on their perception of user needs or their expectation of how the user will interact with the tool or process. This can lead to unnecessary steps or lack of clarity.

Wider Government and NSO policies are generally prioritising digital first public service systems. This requires simple, inclusive, accessible and quality websites, portals and channels. To promote an NSO that puts the citizen at the center and to effectively conduct digital transformation projects, it is appropriate to adopt different types of approaches that together contribute to achieving the expected result. This approach must therefore be systemic, user-centered, participated, open and reiterative. Taking all these elements into consideration, it is possible, in fact, to optimize the design of sites and services in the best possible way, identifying useful solutions to meet the needs of citizens, public administrations and suppliers.

- **Systemic approach**

"To optimize the delivery and use of the service"

Each design process must be guided by an overall vision of all the elements involved: it is therefore appropriate to contextualize the digital services with respect to the ecosystem of the public machine, understanding the needs of the various stakeholders, public and not, and then design their respective interactions, the touchpoints for accessing the service and the technological infrastructures involved in its provision and use.

In order to favor a systemic approach, it is necessary to first define the perimeter of the project, identify main objectives and requirements as well as carefully establish priorities, balancing their feasibility and opportunities. This allows to reduce the complexity of procedures and processes, arranging the methods of use of the service according to the available technologies.

- **User-centered approach**

"Designing citizen-friendly public services"

A user-centered approach implies understanding their behaviors, needs, preferences and expectations with respect to the user experience and interaction with the service; above all it implies favoring the creation of adequate solutions for all citizens, promoting equity and equal opportunities.

A direct relationship with the user allows the web designers to empathize with the users of the service, identifying any limiting elements and creating fully accessible interfaces, as well as

compliant with usability criteria. It is therefore of fundamental importance to involve citizens personally in the various stages of planning, to inform the decision-making process and subsequently validate the results obtained (usability tests).

- **Participated approach**

"Promote collaboration and sharing"

Adopting a participated approach means engaging, in the various project phases, people with different backgrounds, skills and abilities, so as to facilitate the exploration, conception and evaluation of digital solutions together with all the actors involved in the delivery and use of the service.

In this sense, facilitating a participated planning means knowing how to identify and listen to the stakeholders, both internal and external to the NSOs, in order to intercept potential critical issues and project opportunities. It also means enabling the stakeholders to contribute in the best possible way through pre-structured collaborative activities and then report the inputs received in a clear and schematic manner and create shared knowledge useful for aligning the different involved parties.

- **Open approach**

"To not reinvent the wheel and treasure the others' experiences"

In order to make the design of digital public services effective, it is useful to maintain a transparent and constructive design approach, inspired by the principles of open design. An approach that promotes active collaboration between those interested in the digital transformation processes of the NSOs thanks to the public sharing of information, knowledge, tools and design resources, given that similar problems can be answered with common solutions.

Open design therefore consists in using the design and technological resources already shared in the community, in a similar way to what is required by open source practice. A way to enhance the work of others without reinventing the wheel, to improve the quality, usability and functionality of services and systems thanks to shared and well documented good practices.

- **Reiterative approach**

"Cyclically evaluate the obtained results, from an evolutionary perspective"

The fourth fundamental element for the success of design projects is to adopt a reiterative approach, that is an orientation that involves cycles of planning, analysis, definition, development and testing of the solutions identified. The goal is the continuous improvement of digital services and products, also thanks to the monitoring of access data to websites and platforms.

In fact, to guarantee adequate quality standards, it is central to be able to establish clear evaluation criteria, so as to verify not only the results of the project, but also the effective use of a service by users, as well as its correspondence to aims and context. Prototyping, testing and validating are therefore actions that do not apply exclusively to the finished product, but can cyclically affect all stages of the process.

Key messages and information

There always some key or priority messages that NSO' wish to convey to users. These may vary from time to time. Ensuring that these are clearly visible on the Homepage or easily found through search engine optimization ensures a positive experience for users who are looking to find or verify information that is being promoted to users.

Transparency and collaboration, public services must follow the principles of transparency from the very beginning. The projects must be documented in a clear and open way, to make the aims understood, to encourage collaboration at all levels and build a common knowledge base within the organizations and between the public.

The messages offered by NSO must be simple and clear, so that the citizens are able to orient themselves and be autonomous in understanding what they must do to achieve the goal or to do what is required of them. The information that supports this process must be timely, non, for a two-way communication.

User Feedback and Metrics

Website usage is an opportunity for ongoing dialogue with users. Website analytics can be a useful tool, when combined with other metrics, for providing insight on how users interact with the website and the various outputs. Feedback forms, customer surveys, and focus groups also provide opportunities for users to comment either positively or negatively on the site. It is important to manage development of the website in the context of user metrics and feedback. New features and development should always reflect the user experience rather than the business need. The website is often the only way that a user will engage with the brand of Official Statistics. The experience can have a long-lasting impact on their future engagement.

A measurement system must be synthetic (a few key indicators) and specific (i.e. strictly linked to the service to be measured). The main evaluation metrics of effectiveness of a service are the level of adoption, which is expressed in terms of coverage of the service (how many use it) and frequency of use, and user satisfaction.

The creation of a measurable evaluation system is essential to start a sustaining process continuous improvement.

Today, another important way to interact with one's users is through social channels where now even the Public Administrations have landed in an increasingly massive and efficient / effective manner.

This is because more and more citizens look for the solution to their problems on the web and on the social web, they get information through their own networks of relationships, seeking direct and immediate dialogue with their interlocutors within designed spaces. The websites of NSO, in addition to being considered permanent channels of dialogue and the most accessible and least expensive means of communication, must have as their primary aim that of contributing to the affirmation of the citizen's right to be effectively informed. Through the sites, in fact, the NSO have multiple tasks:

- guarantee complete and transparent information on their activity;

- take care of their own institutional image;

- promote contacts with citizens, businesses, other Public Administrations, researchers, media and other entities;

- raise awareness and facilitate access to information and transactional services which must be useful, easily available, usable and constantly updated.

Social Media Content Strategy

Social media platforms are how the world has conversations today. The conversations can be global, and information can be shared without context or verification across multiple platforms at phenomenal speeds. While it can be difficult to comprehend the scale and reach of the information age, there are some elements within the control of NSO's when it comes to engaging with the public through social media. Social media provides massive opportunities to build brand awareness and to reach new and more broadly-based audiences. Any organization with aspirations to build a brand must have a social media strategy aligned to the aims and values of that brand.

Choosing a Platform

There are multiple platforms available through which to share messaging and content with a wider audience. It is neither practical nor necessary to have a presence on all of them. The decision about which to choose will largely depend on the usage within the demographics of your target audience. This will vary across countries and societies, e.g. Twitter might be a key platform for the 35 to 50 age demographic in one country however in another Facebook may be the most popular platform for that demographic. Choosing the correct platform is dependent on what you wish to say, who you wish to reach and action or reaction you wish to generate.

Content is King

This phrase has become something of a cliché in relation to social media content. However as with most clichés it is because it is true. It is always important that social media posts have a purpose and authentically reflect the values and brand of the NSO. Posting a 'fun' video on Tik Tok because that is where the young people are on social media will not achieve anything unless there is a substantive message being conveyed. People generally, and young people, can be quite sophisticated when it comes to branding and messaging on social media and can quickly spot an inauthentic post. The process for developing any social media content should have the following decision-making chronology

- What you want to say
- Who you want to reach
- What you want to achieve
- Which platform or platforms are most suitable
- What content type is most suitable (text, visual, video, tik tok dance!)

There are extensive branding opportunities available through the strategic use of social media, however leveraging this requires a fully developed content strategy that positively reflects the NSO brand and provides value to followers. Social media users tend to share content that is either useful or interesting and your content should reflect this.

Inform the conversation

Social media has a huge role in the spread of both information and misinformation. NSO's are not always going to know where or when bad information is being shared. It is possible however, to recognize when a topic is part of the national conversation and where relevant data might add value. This can be a good opportunity to promote the brand of official statistics as an independent source of trustworthy data. There is a risk that an NSO can be seen to be influencing or commenting on a debate however, so care should be taken when contributing in this way. A neutral post such as 'here are some data that might help inform what is being discussed' is advisable rather than 'A is wrong and B is right and here is the supporting data'. There may be cultural differences which can influence when it is appropriate or not to contribute in this way. Any decision to engage in this way must reflect this and there should be a procedure in place within NSO's to sign off on any public engagement in this way. However, being where the conversation is happening on social media is a huge opportunity to promote the brand of Official Statistics and its relevance in modern society. Social media monitoring tools are a good way to watch an issue and provide early warning of potential communication challenges.

Digital Marketing

As discussed above a well-developed social media content strategy is a key element of brand and reputation management. However, there may be occasions where it is a requirement to reach a wider audience than is possible through the NSO's social media platforms. In this case, paid promotion and digital marketing campaigns offer greater scope to reach both wider and more specific audiences than organic posts. In the case of national campaigns especially, digital marketing can offer a relatively cheap alternative or complement to TV, Radio or Newspaper advertising. The advantages of a digital marketing campaign are in its flexibility and capacity to adjust messaging and target audience based on analytics relating to reach and engagement. Marketing on social media platforms allows for multi-layered, multi-level marketing based on demographics, geographic location, socio-economic background, interest groups, community affiliations etc. The messaging can be varied according to the target audiences and adjusted based on the metrics of the campaign reach and impact. This provides an advantage over more traditional marketing and advertising platforms where the content is developed in advance and is therefore static once it is deployed. Digital marketing campaigns also provide a further opportunity to promote the brand personality and reputation. The content and method of delivery are within the control of the NSO.

Digital marketing is not an area where NSO's would traditionally have identified as a skills requirement. It requires graphic design skills, message development, technical knowledge in relation to ad deployment (platform content rules etc.) and analytic skills in relation to campaign metrics. In

an era where there is growing consumption of news and information through social media rather than traditional media, this is becoming an essential requirement. Addressing this through third party contract or recruitment is a decision for individual NSO's

Staff as Brand Ambassadors

Even with the growth in digital communication, staff will continue to be an important brand carrier and embodiment of the reputation and values of the NSO. Whether it is answering a helpline, presenting at a conference or appearing on national media. In each case how they present themselves, behave and the message they convey, will leave a lasting impression on the audience. Whether this impression is positive or negative should not depend on the individual and staff should have clear guidelines on how they are expected to behave as well as knowledge of the brand values and key priorities of the organisation. It is the responsibility of the organisation to have processes in place to ensure this.

Internal Communication

Effective internal communication enables the flow of information across the organisation, engaging staff and linking people from different departments internally.

Staff members therefore need to have a common understanding of the organisation's role and values and internal communication has an important role here.

When dealing with the outside world, every staff member needs to conduct themselves as an "ambassador" of the organisation. This means, for instance, that a client organisation should not be receiving mixed messages from different staff members on the organisation's objectives, values and brand.

Effective internal communication actions both keep staff aware of developments and help reinforce the values of the organisation. Statistical offices need to be objective providers of official statistics, produced free of undue political or other influence. This message must be properly understood by all staff including why and how this is the case.

Each individual organisation should use all available internal communication channels to inform, listen to and engage staff. Some examples might include:

- Informing staff of developments in the workplace (organizational, practical and technical);
- Briefing newcomers to the organization;
- Facilitating and promoting regular opportunities to meet and talk to senior management;
- Publishing outcomes of task forces, working groups and high-level meetings.

Empowering Staff to act as Ambassadors

Staff should be encouraged and empowered to act as 'ambassadors', passing on the corporate message to the outside world, by providing information through

- Raising staff awareness of activities and products through articles on the organization's intranet;
- Use of in-house publications with relevant content;
- Providing staff with a set of standard PowerPoint slides on the organization, for use in their own more specific presentations;
- Preparing leaflets (virtual and paper) that promote the organization's products and services;
- Training for staff on the use of social media;
- Encouraging active participation, particularly of young statisticians, in conferences and supporting the publication of articles in journals and magazines.

Chapter 4 - Managing Brand and Reputation through a Crisis.

Introduction

Every organisation has the potential to face a crisis which can threaten its reputation, relevance or public trust. Part of effective brand management is to have a robust crisis communication strategy in place which allows the organisation to respond quickly and effectively to these threats and minimise the impact on the reputation of the organisation and the brand. Some examples of crisis are

- Major Errors in published data
- A data breach where respondent information is compromised
- The demands created by an outlier event like the pandemic
- A technology failure e.g. online Census

The UNECE Strategic Communications Framework provides guidance on how to manage communications through a crisis (Link to framework here). Some of the key points are;

- Clarity and transparency on how the error occurred or the crisis developed
- Clarity and transparency as to how it is being dealt with
- Clarity and transparency as to the processes in place to avoid future errors or manage future crises

Managing Brand and Reputation through a Crisis

While it is generally best to avoid operating in crisis mode, it is inevitable the they will occasionally arise, and they may provide opportunities to enhance the brand if managed correctly. This is one of the key reasons for ensuring that there is a high level of awareness of the brand and positive associations with the organisation's reputation. If an organisation brand is generally associated with quality, professionalism and transparency, the 'credit' built up can support it through a crisis. Being able to manage and communicate effectively through a crisis can itself, be a positive reflection of the brand. This is provided crises are a rare event and not a weekly occurrence.

A crisis or outlier event can be an opportunity to display the capacity of the organisation to meet a challenge. The Official Statistics response to the crisis caused by the pandemic has, in many cases enhanced the reputation of NSO's who have demonstrated a capacity for flexibility and innovation in the face of huge demand for timely and relevant data. The organisations who most successfully enhanced their reputations were those who communicated effectively with their users, were quick to respond with new products and datasets and transparent about the limitations of what was made available.

Challenges to be faced post crisis

There are some challenges for brand management having successfully worked through a crisis. In the case of a foreseeable event or a crisis caused by error, it is essential that this does not become the source of a future crisis. Any 'credit' acquired will be lost in the event of similar situation arising in the future. It is essential to review the circumstances and ensure that procedures will avoid this issue arising in the future.

When an organisation is seen to rise the occasion of dealing with a crisis such as the pandemic, the standards achieved can become the 'norm' rather than the exception. A failure to maintain the new standard could have a negative impact on the reputation of the NSO in the future. It is essential to manage expectations of users as to what is possible in a sustainable way but also to challenge the organisation to build on what was achieved during a crisis and try and incorporate it into the routine business.

It is also important not to assume you were successful in handling a crisis. Engagement with users, post crisis surveys and focus groups are an important element of measuring the reputational impact of a crisis.

Measuring and Evaluating your brand

Conclusion

Official Statistics are a cornerstone of a functioning society. In the current environment it is critical for the widest possible audience to be aware of Official Statistics and the organisations that produce them, as a source of independent, reliable and trustworthy information. Ensuring that this is the case requires a multi-layered and multi-faceted approach to communications and marketing.

A well-developed brand and reputation are a key strategic asset in promoting the value of Official Statistics and combatting the impact of disinformation on our societies. Responsibility for the brand lies with staff at all levels of the organisation. A strong brand requires quality outputs, a strong communication strategy and active engagement with users. Marketing and reputation management are key to ensuring a visible and recognisable brand which reflects the values of the organisation.

Appendices/Case Studies

I suggest that the guidelines and experiences outlined in the document can be reasonably summarised and more detailed use cases can be included here or as separate documents if that is more appropriate.