

## **The role of brand management, marketing and crisis communication for Statistical Organisations**

Aeidin Sheppard (CSO, Ireland)

*aeidin.sheppard@cso.ie*

### ***Abstract***

The main function of National Statistical Offices and other International Statistical organizations 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, NSOs 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 NSOs. One key strategic asset is a well-developed, well-managed brand and reputation. Brand is the vehicle through which NSOs can build awareness of outputs, build relationships with users and create a link or association with the organization values. A brand must tell the story or paint a picture of your organization. In the case of NSOs 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 organization. However, ‘brand’ is a much broader concept than this. It is the personality of the organization. It incorporates the values, the tone of voice, the messaging and generally how the organization presents itself to the outside world. While the foundation of statistical organizations may be high-quality, relevant statistics, brand and reputation is how the outside world perceives them and makes decisions about their value and relevance.