

## ***Five Tips for Regatta PR Success***

Public Relations is a daunting term, and in an age where it seems like every sporting event has professional social media staff, videographers, and more, it's easy to think that your local one-design regatta is not deserving of a proper PR plan. This couldn't be further from the truth. Whether you're running a small weekend regatta or a national championship, it's important that your audience can connect with what is going on both on and off the water.

This audience isn't just fans and family of the sailors: consider your event sponsors, clubs and supporting organizations, and other sailors who couldn't make it to your event. It's important to tie all of them into your coverage. This means different things for many clubs and events, just be sure to think about how you're going to communicate with those keeping track of your event from the outside. There are endless ways to tackle this task, but below you'll find some general suggestions to get your regatta PR on the right track.

### ***My top five tips for Regatta PR:***

#### **1) Make this someone's job and let them lead!**

- a) It's easy to neglect, or even entirely cut out regatta PR from planning. More often than not, off and on-water activities take more planning and seem more 'mission critical'. One of the most important steps in effectively publicizing your regatta is making the decision to prioritize PR and assigning a point person to manage your public relations. This could simply be assigning a volunteer as an administrator on your club's Facebook page or tasking an organizer with hiring outside help.

Starting with a committed PR lead will put you ahead of most regattas and ensure that the following steps can be taken care of without any 'sweat' from regatta chairs.

#### **2) Make a plan and stick to it**

- a) When I cover events, I often map out when I will make certain posts, release articles, and contact news services. This is a pretty high level of planning and not something every regatta will need. However, it's important that whoever is handling PR for your regatta takes the time to think through what sorts of content will need to be released and when they should be prepared.

At the bare minimum, try to have an idea of how many social media posts you may want per day, if they should be photos, videos, or text, and if you want to release daily reports. Know which platforms you'll use, who you want to connect

with, and who will be responsible for each.

### **3) Invest in visuals: a good photographer may be your greatest asset.**

- a) Sailors love few things more than seeing pictures of themselves racing. Family, friends, and others not at the regatta love seeing photos and videos online to know how the racing is going. Regatta sponsors love having professional looking imagery to repost and showcase their support for our sport. The moral of the story is that having a dedicated photographer at your regatta adds tremendous value and should not be overlooked. Regatta photographers do not always have to be expensive and often are happy to be involved in managing social media and PR as well as taking pictures. This small investment is often worth losing the potential headache of chairing a regatta *and* having to try to handle PR.

If you're looking for a photographer for a regatta, here are a few things you should always verify before bringing them in:

- i) Make sure they can deliver pictures same-day. Much of the value of a good photographer comes from their having photos ready for your daily press release and social media. Make sure you can get images as soon as possible to use across all of your PR platforms.
- ii) Make sure they understand what you are looking for in their photos. Should they be highlighting sponsor logo stickers or focusing on faces? Should they be looking for wide angles to showcase a venue or zooming in tight on teams? Have these discussions and bring example photographs!
- iii) Clarify whether or not images will be available to competitors and at what price they may be. It's common that photographers will come to regattas, photograph the entire weekend, and competitors will never see the images or get a chance to purchase or download them. You, as a regatta organizer, should liaise between the sailors and photographers so everybody wins.

If you can't afford a professional, find a club member or supporter with a camera who might be willing to come out. Shooting sailing is fun; you'll find that most people want to try their hand. At the very minimum, have an RC volunteer snap some pictures with their phones! Phone cameras these days are incredible tools.

### **4) Stay 'On Brand' ALWAYS**

- a) When you're planning your event, make sure to pick a strong logo, event name, and color scheme. Stick to these throughout the event. Similarly, make sure you have high resolution copies of your sponsors' and partners' logos. You don't want to represent them with grainy or pixelated versions.

From the Sailing Instructions to signage, press releases and more, try to use the same font, color scheme, and logos. By the end of your coverage, people should begin to recognize that a piece of content has come from your regatta before they even look closely at it.

#### **5) Don't go radio silent**

- a) The most important part of publicizing your regatta is actually putting out content. This content doesn't need to be professional or polished: people just want to see how the sailing is going, keep track of their friends, and form some association with this event they're not at. If this means all you can muster is posting cell phone pictures from the regatta party, do that. If you have an entire media team dedicated to your event, that works too.

Be sure that, if nothing else, your results, race tracking, and less active bits of coverage are always available. Publicize your results link **BEFORE** the regatta starts so eager fans can keep up on their own time.

In this age of social media, it is easier than ever to get information about your event out to the public. Any class, club, or competition can and should be visible.

Keep in mind that these tips will only work if you make the active choice to invest in your regatta PR. This doesn't mean spending big money on experts, but rather, having a commitment throughout your event to produce and share content consistently.

Sailing PR is not a one-size-fits-all system, and you will find what works best for your event and audience. Experiment with live streaming weeknight races, finding amateur photographers for weekend races, and video interviewing sailors after racing. You will find that you become more comfortable covering these smaller scenarios and can learn what your followers want to see. Develop your plan, adjust over time, and work to execute as best you can.

Good luck, have fun, and if you have any questions, feel free to reach out!

Douglas Wake is a sailing photographer, media expert, and sailor from Madison, Wisconsin. He has managed social media and PR for organizations including the International Lightning Class Association, University of Wisconsin Sailing Team, 2NINER, and the Thistle Class Association. See more of his work at [medoramedia.pixieset.com/portfolio/](http://medoramedia.pixieset.com/portfolio/)