



WORLD COM
Public Relations Group
The Local Advantage. Worldwide.

Detailed Advice Guide

Launching technology companies or products in Europe – how to get noticed quickly, drive sales & maintain awareness

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Introduction

We are often asked by our clients for guidance on how to launch technology products and companies in Europe and what is important to consider when navigating the different regions. As a result we asked Worldcom Public Relations Group experts from around Europe and the US to provide their insight into this topic for their territory.

The content of the Guide is based on the questions answered by our experts on a Webinar first aired in October 2016. You can listen to a recording of the Webinar by clicking on this [link](#).

We hope you find the Guide helpful. Further Guides will be provided for each of our other Technology Webinars.

If you would like to discuss any of the topics raised with any of our experts, please contact Crispin Manners @ crispinmanners@worldcomgroup.com

Our Partners enable you to design, deploy, track and evaluate communications campaigns that deliver outstanding results and sustained value. By working with Worldcom you can access a significant communications advantage whenever and wherever you need it. If you would like more information about Worldcom and its partners, please contact Todd Lynch, Managing Director @ toddlynch@worldcomgroup.com or call Todd on +1-212-286-9550.

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Panelists

CZECH REPUBLIC

Patrik Schober

GERMANY

Corinna Voss

ITALY

Diego Biasi

SPAIN

Imma Folch-Lázaro

USA

Derek James

Facilitator

Crispin Manners – United Kingdom



What should I look for in a local PR agency if I want my product launch in Europe to succeed?

SPAIN – IMMA

PR is all about engaging audiences. Therefore, when working with a local PR agency, it is important to check that they have the right relationships with the right media for your product or service as well as expertise in product launches.

CZECH REPUBLIC – PATRIK

It is important to look at their relationship with media and partners. It is also important to look at references. The agency should have prior experience within the industry as well as experience with the stakeholders in the market.

USA – DEREK

Having the right relationships within the media and the industry analyst community is critical. Looking for an agency that has proof of results is important. Creativity is also a big factor to consider. In the European market, there is so much noise and competition, so finding an agency with a creative edge is also a big plus.

GERMANY – CORINNA

I believe that expertise in the market segment relevant to the company is key. Also, an understanding of how to work internationally and give the campaign the local angle.

When looking for a local PR agency, it is important to look at the relationships and connections that the agency has to media, analysts and key stakeholders.

Look for proof of results and the creativity needed to rise above the background noise.

Would I need a central agency to co-ordinate a launch across Europe?

Look at your own resources and where they may need to be supplemented.

Central agencies are good for delivering cohesion, consistency and creativity.

Ensure you have a European agency as the coordinator or you will not benefit from local knowledge.

ITALY – DIEGO

It depends on how the client is organised. Sometimes the co-ordination effort is vital to the launch as it provides the backbone in terms of process and methodology. Co-ordination also helps streamline the whole activity ensuring a smooth rollout of the launch.

GERMANY – CORINNA

It really depends on the structure and capacity that a company has.

When launching your product, you should really look at the needs of the various markets. Ask questions such as: where are my top tier markets? How can I cover them directly or indirectly? Do I need a lead agency for all of Europe or just certain territories?

SPAIN – IMMA

This will depend on your own structure. You can have an agency to co-ordinate as long as it is local and has the same philosophy as other local agencies. This is more effective and will enable you to benefit from the collective creativity of all the agencies.

When introducing an entirely new category, what would you do to make people understand why it is exciting and important?

GERMANY – CORINNA

With a new category, what you are launching is not necessarily a 'product' but a 'category of product'. With the launch of Fitbit, the topic of wearable tech was very new to the German market. We had to educate the media and the end consumer on the USPs of the product and the difference it makes to people's lives. It is a completely different type of communication than launching a product in an existing category. You have to communicate with the stakeholders and work with ambassadors that can add credibility.

ITALY – DIEGO

Creativity is important because you want to challenge the way people think. If you introduce a new category and want to interact with specific audiences, you need to educate them and introduce new scenarios and terminology. When we launched the Parrot - the first helicopter drones, the category did not exist. It took a strong creative approach to introduce this category to the media. This included impactful events such as a press conference where we recreated the Grand Canyon. We then introduced the drone floating over a river. This visual approach really worked in making the Parrot more memorable for the media and showed its huge potential.

USA – DEREK

Repetition is essential to success. Categories are not created overnight. Therefore, if you are planning to introduce a category within any region, you must have plans to regularly reinforce the messages and find new ways to make sure that the category is properly understood.

SPAIN – IMMA

Focus on teaching the media about the category. Also, select editors who are influencers and generate one-to-one interviews as well as background articles.

To introduce a new category successfully, you need to challenge thinking and explain the impact the new category will have on people's lives.

Impactful and visual events can help convey the potential of the new category.

Regular reinforcement of key messages and winning the support of experts and celebrities is essential to establishing the category.

How important are bloggers in reaching target consumers/business buyers at launch?

Approaches will vary across Europe so make sure you get local support.

As an emerging and evolving category, bloggers are becoming increasingly more important in influencing consumer behaviour.

Some bloggers are starting to adopt the same practices as journalists – with some requesting payment. Some are starting to use video and YouTube to build their own brand and following.

SPAIN – IMMA

In Spain bloggers are important – particularly in the consumer market. Winning the support of bloggers will connect brands with consumers and build trust in the brand quickly.

CZECH REPUBLIC – PATRIK

In Eastern Europe, we have a lot of tech and general media. Therefore, we do not have a community of tech bloggers.

GERMANY – CORINNA

Bloggers are very important, however when approaching them, they may expect payment. Whether a blogger will expect to be paid depends on the amount of follow up that you may require. The high-end bloggers, especially in the lifestyle, fashion and mobility sector will expect to be paid a fee starting from €1,000. There are some smaller bloggers who may be interested in just trying the product out. They can be used as ambassadors on platforms like Facebook.

ITALY – DIEGO

Bloggers are evolving as a category. The most entrepreneurial ones realise that they are making an impact and have influence in the market. These bloggers are becoming more selective and demanding. Bloggers are also experimenting with their own channel as well as other channels such as social media. To evaluate the importance of bloggers, we have to take into consideration not just views and visits, but also the audience. In Italy, we have seen a growth of bloggers using YouTube to integrate video content professionally.

USA – DEREK

The blogger category has evolved considerably. YouTube and other social channels are now seen as a way to drive interaction with audiences. It is not always important to find the individual with the biggest following – you have to consider how the individual will interact with your product. If you want to make a deep dive, then it is important that you look for people that will go in-depth into your product – this is not something that all the bigger bloggers will do.

Should you pre-announce a product launch? If so, what should be the lag time between the announcement and the product's availability?

GERMANY – CORINNA

I recommend interacting with long lead media earlier than short lead media or bloggers. You need to ensure that the time between briefing and availability of product is as short as possible. It is all about priming your target group and setting the date for the briefing. In terms of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), they are not favoured in Germany. Bloggers tend to be very honest and stick to embargo dates so NDAs are not always necessary.

SPAIN – IMMA

In Spain, we would like the lag time to be close to zero. The best results occur when you announce a product that is immediately available to purchase or pre-order. We would like to directly link the launch with sales activity.

CZECH REPUBLIC – PATRIK

I am not a fan of pre-announcing the product as the Czech market will often complain if a product is announced and not immediately available.

Pre-announcements can occur, however it's important that the lag time is as short as possible – in certain markets near to zero.

Audiences immediately want access to the product and may complain if they have to wait.

Brief the long lead media first.



How important is to have review products available for media and other audiences?

Review products are pivotal to a successful launch. It allows journalists and bloggers to have reviews and articles ready to go at the time of launch.

Reviews help build trust and credibility – delivering greater impact at launch.

Resist the temptation to limit availability of review products.

CZECH REPUBLIC – PATRIK

It is very important to provide selected journalists the ability review products ahead of launch.

GERMANY – CORINNA

In Germany, review products are essential to a successful launch. It is one area of the budget that should always be adequately supported.

SPAIN – IMMA

In Spain, having review products available for bloggers is very important. Seeding and testing with the right media helps to build trust with consumers as the coverage as is seen coming from a peer who has the same interests.



If a competitor has a better product, would you recommend we should invest in a launch?

ITALY – DIEGO

We would look at which media supported the competitor's product and what they liked most about it. We would then target other journalists and give them special treatment. We would also highlight areas where your product is stronger. It would be a mistake to try and accentuate all the product features.

GERMANY – CORINNA

It really depends on how much better the competitor's product is. If your product has some advantages that would be valued by buyers, I would accentuate these strengths. If there are no advantages, I would advise against launching.

SPAIN – IMMA

We would need to define how we position ourselves to highlight the positive differences that would appeal in the Spanish market. For example, while the core functions may be the same, your product might be available in a special colour that has special appeal in Spain. Armed with the right messaging, we can then invest in the launch.

Without very clear advantages, our advice would be not to launch. It is pointless launching a 'me too' product.

If there are some advantages or elements that would appeal to the local market, then we would build strong messaging to highlight these differences.

It is also important to analyse which media have supported competitors in the past and provide rival media with special treatment.

How much time do you need to be able to prepare a launch?

Preparation time varies by country. The time needed to prepare for a launch will depend on whether the product messaging is ready and optimized for each country.

Timing will also vary by the type of product being launched. For example, a B2C product may need a longer lead time than an enterprise launch because of the need to arrange reviews.

USA – DEREK

It depends on how established your messaging is and how clearly defined your differentiation is. If they are strong and ready, a PR company can move very quickly. If you are launching a B2C product, we would recommend allowing four to six weeks. This is to ensure that product reviewers have the product early enough to deliver coverage at launch.

On the enterprise side, there are fewer product review opportunities. Therefore, you can be ready within four weeks so long as all the materials are ready and you have a chance to engage with the appropriate analysts (not necessarily the top ones).

SPAIN – IMMA

In Spain, we would recommend a minimum of three weeks to set up all the information that we need and to contact appropriate journalists/bloggers for product testing.

GERMANY – CORINNA

In an ideal world, we would recommend having two months to prepare for a launch. Things can be done faster, but two months provides the time necessary to carry out the analysis, planning and preparation needed to succeed.

How would you recommend we build on the success of the launch? What do we need available to keep people interested?

CZECH REPUBLIC – PATRIK

In Eastern Europe, there needs to be a local spokesperson in the market. It is helpful to have an individual with knowledge of English to communicate with the public as journalists and individual will find this source more credible.

Regarding activities, there needs to be a mix. This could include: media relations, paid articles, editorial, social media, newsletters and seminars.

ITALY

There will need to be someone available who can build relationships. Journalists understand immediately if a company is willing to develop a market. You will need to be able to show that you are close to the market and that you want to contribute to its growth. This matters to the Italian media.

GERMANY – CORINNA

You would need to establish relationships by delivering valuable content and stories to engage with media, bloggers, customers and ambassadors.

SPAIN – IMMA

Interest can be maintained through seeding, workshops, and one-on-one meetings. This will keep information flowing. Companies need to show interest in staying in the Spanish market and demonstrate how they plan to invest and grow within it. Local spokespeople are necessary as English is not the natural language. To sustain awareness, we have to constantly consider channel media as well as using social events to invite key players within the channel industry. In Spain, you need to get all the different stakeholders involved: media, channel and sales.

You need to prove you are investing in the local market and contributing to its growth.

Local spokespeople are essential. In some markets – such as Spain, you will need to communicate in the local language.

You will also need to create a pipeline of content that will continue to accentuate your strengths and differences.



Whether you choose to launch a product that has had a negative reception elsewhere depends on the extent of the negativity and whether the issues have been resolved or not.

If the launch goes ahead, you will need to find the strongest angle to approach to focus on.

If the product has received negative comments in another market, would you still launch it in Europe or a European territory?

GERMANY – CORINNA

This can only be judged on a case by case basis. In general, you have to analyse what the negative comments were: was it a general problem or was it market specific? If it is a significant problem about the service or product that has not been resolved, I would not recommend a launch.

If it is a market specific problem such as a localisation issue, then you have to look to see if that problem can also happen in the European market as well.

SPAIN – IMMA

Yes, we would still go ahead with a launch. Negative comments will help us find the strongest angle to focus on.



What challenges do American organisations face when trying to communicate in European countries?

USA – DEREK

Europe is very important for US based companies for global expansion. Depending on the size of the organisation, they may not have individuals in each territory to act as spokespeople. One of the workarounds we have found is using the C-Suite as the primary spokespeople, having them alongside the country manager or someone based in that region. This presence shows that the company is committed to the market with the approved spokesperson delivering the message but also demonstrating that the brand is fully invested in the country.

GERMANY – CORINNA

An issue that we encounter is that some US companies expect to be able to operate in English. While many tech media speak English, they prefer to receive materials in their own language. This impacts on budget and lead times because of the need to translate.

ITALY – DIEGO

Budget can be a challenge. We sometimes find US companies expect that a similar or lower budget will suffice in Europe. But unlike in the US, where one agency may be sufficient, in Europe you may need multiple agencies to cover the key territories.

CZECH – PATRIK

News release distribution can be a challenge. Wire services do not have the same impact in Europe. News is better distributed direct to journalists in the local language.

Budget, language, access to spokespeople and news distribution are all challenges faced by US based companies when launching in Europe.

This makes it very important to focus effort on the territories that are most effective.

What is the one takeaway you would like to add in regards to launching products in Europe?

To succeed in Europe you will need to:

- **Think integrated and support PR with target advertising**
- **Allow enough time to understand the local market**
- **Work with your local agency to create a tailored approach to the launch**
- **Ensure there is adequate budget to sustain interest after the launch.**

CZECH REPUBLIC – PATRIK

Be brief and think integrated. Be ready to support PR with targeted advertising.

SPAIN – IMMA

Bring the CEO or someone who has the power to make a decision. Think integrated and support PR with a budget for advertising.

GERMANY – CORINNA

Allow enough time to understand the local market and prepare a brief. Do not come with a ready-made plan, instead give the agency time to work with you on a tailored concept for the German market.

ITALY – DIEGO

The budget must be able to accommodate the follow-up phase to avoid wasting money on capturing interest and then not sustaining it.



If you would like to discuss the content of this document, or its recommendations, or to talk to one of our experts about your communications needs, please contact: Crispin Manners crispinmanners@worldcomgroup.com

or

If you would like more information about Worldcom and its partners, please contact Todd Lynch, Managing Director @ toddlynch@worldcomgroup.com or call Todd on +1-212-286-9550.

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