



7HUM2010 Crisis Communication and Reputation Management RFEF Communication Strategy 2024

Assessment of the RFEF's Reputational Gap

Corporate Reputation

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The current corporate reputation of the RFEF is like a mosaic, comprised of both potential and significant challenges. While there are glimpses of a future the recent crisis has cast a long shadow that has left lasting marks on the organizations image.

Salience; The RFEF enjoys brand awareness primarily associated with men's football. However, it aspires to achieve visibility among diverse audiences by promoting women's football and fostering ethical governance. This ambition holds potential for raising the profile of the RFEF and attracting a more diverse fan base.

Credibility; This aspect has suffered greatly due to the crisis. The unshakeable reputation of transparency and leadership, within the RFEF has been tarnished, leading to public doubt regarding its integrity. Reestablishing trust will be an endeavor that necessitates transparent communication, independent investigations and unquestionably ethical practices.

Distinctiveness; The RFEF is currently struggling to distinguish itself from the rest. Its image lacks a unique factor often blending in with other football federations. To stand out and make a difference the RFEF could embrace values such as diversity, inclusion and social responsibility. This would set it apart. Establish it as a forward thinking and impactful organization.

Esteem: The crisis has significantly affected how the public perceives the RFEF. Trust in its leadership has decreased, leading to associations with the organization. Rebuilding trust will require a renewed focus on fair play, player wellbeing and making positive social contributions

Vision

Looking ahead there is an opportunity for the RFEF's reputation to rise from the ashes of the crisis. It shouldn't simply aim to return to its state but strive for new heights. The vision is to transform the RFEF into a reputable leader within global football while also becoming a source of great national pride.

Salience; To achieve this vision it is crucial for the RFEF to go beyond men’s football and become known for its commitment to women’s football, grassroots development and social responsibility. It should be recognized as a source of information and a champion for inclusivity by engaging diverse audiences through compelling storytelling and community outreach.

Credibility; Transparency will form the foundation of the RFEF’s efforts to rebuild its reputation. Open and honest communication, engagement with all stakeholders and the presence of independent oversight will cultivate trust and a sense of accountability. The organization is committed to improving, readily acknowledging and addressing any shortcomings while upholding ethical practices in all aspects of its work.

Distinctiveness; The RFEF aims to carve out a role for itself by spearheading innovative initiatives that bring about positive change in the world of sports. By embracing cutting edge technology promoting practices and advocating for the wellbeing of players, the RFEF sets itself apart as a progressive and forward-thinking organization.

Esteem; The RFEF seeks to regain respect by championing fair play and integrity. Its dedication, to player development, responsibility and fostering positive fan engagement will be deeply ingrained in everything it does. The organization actively contributes to community wellbeing while fostering a sense of pride and unity through football’s unifying power.

Communication Strategy

Event & Date	Comms Output	Targeted Stakeholders	Justification	Crisis planning
Speech by Acting President / Jan 4 2024.	A video recording of the speech on the RFEF YouTube channel (both live and archived), a transcript published on the RFEF website, a press release and social media promotion highlighting key points.	Spanish football enthusiasts (fans of the women team), RFEF sponsors, RFEF employees, broader Spanish community and the Spanish government.	This event sets a tone for the year ahead, showcases RFEF commitment to change and transparency and takes the first step in rebuilding trust. By acknowledging mistakes outlining corrective measures taken and expressing genuine remorse; align with Image Repair Theory.	Anticipate scepticism or negative media coverage. Addressing concerns directly is essential while providing evidence of progress. Emphasizing dialogue with stakeholders is crucial. Leverage Situational Crisis Communication Theory by customizing messages and responses to address concerns

				of different audiences while maintaining a calm approach.
<p>Launching "Futuro Unido" Initiative (February 15 2024)</p>	<p>A website for the initiative, a press conference announcement and a social media campaign using the #FuturoUnido hashtag.</p>	<p>Spanish football fans, RFEF players across all levels of involvement, media outlets and NGOs and community organizations supporting football related causes.</p>	<p>Demonstrates a commitment to core values, actively involves a diverse range of stakeholders and showcases tangible actions for creating positive change. This aligns with the strategy of rebuilding reputation by implementing reforms and working towards a more equitable future.</p>	<p>To address any scepticism it is important to emphasize concrete initiatives within "Futuro Unido ", actively engage stakeholders and highlight real progress stories. Tailor the messages based on the Situational Crisis Communication Theory to resonate effectively with each audience.</p>
<p>Open House at RFEF Headquarters (March 10 2024)</p>	<p>Promote the event through media platforms, extend Media invitations and create an event website with detailed registration information.</p>	<p>Spanish football fans, Spanish media outlets, and grassroots organizations.</p>	<p>This event promotes transparency by providing an opportunity for engagement with the public while also humanizing the RFEF. It employs Image Repair strategies such as acknowledging mistakes (mortification) and taking action.</p>	<p>Respond promptly to any negative coverage by emphasizing open dialogue, ensure that trained security personnel are present to maintain safety during the event and follow guidelines from Situational Crisis Communication theory when crafting responses.</p>
<p>Launch of Womens Football Development</p>	<p>Issue a press release announcing the launch of the fund, make partnership announcements in conjunction with organizations or</p>	<p>Media outlets, sponsors interested in supporting women's football initiatives or development programs specifically catered towards female players</p>	<p>Demonstrates a commitment to equality, attract investments and empower women in football. This is in line with the image repair theory.</p>	<p>Ensure distribution of funds and independent supervision, regularly communicate progress and adjust messaging based on the crisis situation.</p>

Fund (April 1 2024)	sponsors involved in women's football development efforts and run a social media campaign featuring prominent female players.			
#FuturoUnido Grassroots Festival (May 15 2024)	Promote the event, launch a social media campaign and sponsor partnerships.	Clubs, families and young players.	Encourages accessibility and grassroots development. Utilizes strategies of bolstering and transcendence to repair the image.	Conduct local outreach and develop contingency plans. Address issues openly by following the principles of Situational Crisis Communication Theory.
Jornadas por la Igualdad" Symposium (June 1 2024)	Issue a press release, create an event website and run a social media campaign.	Media outlets, athletes, academics, NGOs and business leaders.	Demonstrates leadership in promoting equality, fosters dialogue and collaboration; and implements actions and transcendence strategies effectively.	Ensure a representation of various viewpoints, during interactive sessions. Widely promote takeaways from the symposium. Adjust messaging based on the crisis situation following Situational Crisis Communication Theory.
Women Football Showcase (July 15 2024)	We will use social media campaigns, media coverage and video highlights to promote the event.	Focus will be on media, sponsors, fans, players and investors.	The showcase aims to shine a spotlight on women's football, garner support from stakeholders and inspire future generations. We plan to bolster our image through this event.	We will ensure that the event is accessible to all and actively promote it through partnerships. In case of any issues arising, we will openly address them using

				the Situational Crisis Communication Theory.
Futuro Unido" Town Halls (September 25 2024)	Efforts will include coverage in media outlets, social media engagement during the town halls and post event reports.	These town halls are designed for fans, players, media representatives and community groups.	The goal is to deepen engagement within the community and gather valuable insights that can help enhance the initiative. Image repair strategies include showing remorse and taking actions when needed.	Actively promote these town halls in advance. If there is any feedback received or issues raised during these events, address them openly while demonstrating willingness to adapt based on input. Following the Situational Crisis Communication Theory is crucial in the crisis response.
RFEF Transparency Report" Launch (December 15th 2024)	Press release containing information about the transparency report, a website for hosting the report and sharing highlights on various social media platforms.	Media, fans, sponsors, government officials.	Shows dedication to being accountable and rebuilding trust. Utilizes strategies to repair the image such, as admitting mistakes and taking measures.	Guarantee accuracy of the report and openly address any concerns raised by stakeholders. Adjust crisis communication based on the Situational Crisis Communication Theory.

Reference List

THE SPEECH

A New Era for Spanish Football; Speech to be delivered by Pedro Rocha, the Acting President of RFEF on January 4th, 2024.

Buenas tardes a todas y a todos (Good evening, everyone).

We stand at the threshold of a year a fresh chapter in the tale of Spanish football. As the Acting President of the RFEF I address you today with a heart burdened by recent challenges but also filled with optimism and an unwavering commitment to the future. The past few months have been a testing period for our sport marked by shadows cast upon the beautiful game we hold dear. We have encountered conflicts, public scrutiny and raised questions, about the core values that form the foundation of the RFEF. However, let me make it clear; we will not allow these shadows to define us. We refuse to let them overshadow the light that resides within Spanish footballs core. Today signifies a turning point as we embark on a start.

Before we progress ahead it is imperative that we acknowledge our past. We must look back truthfully. Humbly while recognizing both our mistakes and the pain they may have caused. To those who have experienced hurt, disillusionment or betrayal please accept my apologies. We, the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) acknowledge that we fell short in fulfilling our responsibility to uphold the standards of conduct and leadership.

However, we understand that mere apologies are insufficient. It is crucial for us to take actions to rebuild trust and reinstate faith in our organization. We have already taken the steps towards this goal. We have initiated an investigation into recent events ensuring complete transparency throughout the process. Additionally, we are in the process of establishing an Ethics Committee dedicated to upholding integrity and accountability within the RFEF.

It is important to recognize the strides we have made despite facing challenges. Our women's national team has consistently excelled on the field serving as a source of pride and inspiration for our nation. Their recent World Cup victory showcases their talent unwavering dedication and indomitable spirit.

We remain committed to providing better support for our female footballers by offering them adequate resources, opportunities and support they rightfully deserve. We will continue investing in grassroots development programs, women centered coaching initiatives and improvement of the female professional leagues. Our pursuit of equality extends beyond the field. We promise to bridge the gender pay gap and ensure female footballers receive financial recognition, for their contributions. Our aim is not just to bridge the gender pay gap but also ensure equal treatment, for all athletes.

The future of football extends beyond winning trophies or generating revenue alone. It's all about creating an ecosystem that fosters passion, talent and fair competition. Our goal is to establish a sport that's inclusive, accessible and reflects the values we hold dear. That's why we're introducing an initiative called "Futuro Unido" (United Future).

"Futuro Unido" rests on three pillars; transparency being the first one. By dismantling secrecy, we allow fans, players and media to have their voices heard while shedding light on our actions and finances through reports. There will be no room, for shadows or hidden agendas.

Accountability serves as our shield guiding us with the eyes of the public. The second principle, diversity creates an environment where everyone is invited to join in the magic of the game. Whether it's at grassroots levels or professional leagues opportunities abound for individuals from all walks of life. Football becomes a reflection of our society's richness embracing and celebrating its facets.

Furthermore "Futuro Unido" emphasizes responsibility and reminds us that footballs impact extends beyond the field. We utilize its influence to address issues like gender discrimination, racism and violence head on. Collaborating with NGOs and community organizations becomes our rallying cry as we leave a lasting legacy of change even after the final whistle blows. "Futuro Unido" is not a motto; it represents a commitment woven together with passion, talent and fair play. Each fan, player and stakeholder form a part of this tapestry. United in our dedication to shape a future where football transcends mere entertainment and becomes a force, for empowerment, unity and healing. This is the story we all share, written in strokes of "Futuro Unido," where dreams know no limits and the enchantment of football brings us together.

Rebuilding the RFEF cannot be accomplished alone; it requires effort. I am counting on your support; every player, coach, fan and supporter of football to join me in this endeavor. We need to join forces and work together towards the shared objective of creating a future for our sport. It's time to leave behind the aspects of the past and embrace a new beginning. We should proudly showcase the essence of Spanish football to the world. Our passion, skill, determination and most importantly our unwavering love, for the beautiful game. Let the world witness the essence of Spanish football not overshadowed by past shortcomings but shining brightly as we build a future together. Hold my hand let your voice be heard set free your passion, together we will soar! Thanks to all of you, I appreciate it.

¡Viva el fútbol español!

¡Viva la RFEF!

¡Viva España!

EVALUATION OF THE RFEF'S SPEECH AND COMMUNICATION PLAN

The year 2023 had an impact on Spanish football as the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) faced a crisis of trust and ethical issues (Green Left Weekly, 2023; Azzon, 2023; Dunbar, 2023; Bonesteel & Ríos 2023; & Bisset, 2023). The RFEF is not just dealing with the present challenges but also striving to create a future where the love for the game can flourish once again. This essay explores how the RFEF's speech and communication plan reflect their stylistic choices. It examines how these choices align with crisis communication theory. Assesses their potential to rebuild trust and reignite enthusiasm for Spanish football.

The speech delivered by Acting President Pedro Rocha has been meticulously crafted with stylistic decisions. The opening acknowledges the cloud that has loomed over the beautiful game using somber language to highlight the seriousness of the situation. This aligns with Image Repair Theory (Coombs, 2007) which emphasizes admitting mistakes and expressing remorse. However, as the speech progresses it quickly shifts towards an optimistic tone, by emphasizing "a new era" and "a turning point. This change in tone capitalizes on the idea of transcendence within Image Repair Theory, highlighting a commitment to transformation and a brighter future. The language used reinforces this ethos by opting for transparency and directness avoiding confusing jargon and instead choosing clear and emotive language. Phrases like "acknowledging any pain we may have caused" and "we acknowledge our shortcomings" resonate with remorse paving the way for rebuilding trust. Additionally, the speech sprinkles in references to "passion" and "love for the game " reminding the audience of the shared connection that binds the RFEF and its stakeholders. This intentional evocation of shared identity aligns with the stage of taking action in Image Repair Theory, showcasing proactive steps towards reform and positive contributions to the sport.

In addition to language choices this speech is filled with persuasive rhetoric aimed at regaining trust and igniting enthusiasm. The use of metaphors such as "overcoming shadows" and "a united future" creates mental images that resonate with the audience emotions. Appeals to values such as "integrity" and "accountability" tap into their sense of justice and desire for an improved RFEF. Moreover, the speech makes use of repetition to highlight phrases such as "Futuro Unido" and "RFEF Español," creating a sense of unity and shared purpose. This technique aligns with the principles outlined in Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Seeger et al. 2007) which emphasizes the importance of messaging that ensures clarity and captures the audience attention towards the new direction.

The speech also effectively utilizes storytelling recounting the accomplishments of the women's national team, while outlining specific steps towards improved governance and ethical practices.

This narrative approach, as emphasized in Crisis Response Strategies (Coombs & Holladay 2010) personalizes the message and enables individuals to connect with RFEF on a more human level. By showcasing actions and a commitment to change subtly employing Image Repair Theory bolstering strategy, it highlights strengths and demonstrates the organizations proactive approach in overcoming past challenges.

The communication plan devised by RFEF extends beyond the framework presented in the speech; it encompasses a comprehensive strategy aimed at rebuilding trust and reigniting passion. It centers, around three aspects; transparency, diversity and responsibility. These elements align with both Image Repair Theory and Situational Crisis Communication Theory principles. Ensuring transparency is crucial to address the trust issues highlighted by Coombs (2007) and Benoit & Schilder (2007). By promoting inclusivity in women's football, RFEF can tackle fairness concerns and align with the "social responsibility" element of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Seeger et al., 2007). Taking responsibility means practicing ethics and

engaging with the community, showcasing commitment to change and aligning with the "corrective action" and "transcendence" stages of Image Repair Theory (Coombs, 2007).

The plan's strategic approach is further emphasized through its events. For example, the launch of the "Futuro Unido" initiative and the "Open House" at RFEF headquarters directly address transparency needs. Encourage engagement as advocated by both theories. Similarly, through initiatives like the "Jornadas por la Igualdad" symposium and the "Women Football Showcase" the plan demonstrates dedication to diversity and social responsibility. These events showcase efforts in addressing past shortcomings while working towards a more equitable future.

Drawing insights from crisis communication case studies the RFEF's communication plan combines inspiration with innovation. The FIFA scandal in 2015 serves as a tale highlighting the negative outcomes that can result from lack of transparency and ethical misconduct. The RFEF's focus on transparency and independent investigations mirrors FIFA's adoption of similar measures showing a proactive approach towards learning from past mistakes (Crisis Response Strategies, Coombs & Holladay 2010). However, the RFEF plan goes beyond imitation by emphasizing trust building through community engagement an aspect that FIFA initially overlooked in its response.

Another relevant case study is the Volkswagen emissions scandal of 2015. Initially Volkswagen's crisis management heavily relied on apologies and corrective actions aligning with stages known as "mortification" and "corrective action" according to Image Repair Theory (Coombs, 2007). However, their lack of transparency and community involvement ultimately undermined their responses effectiveness (Seeger et al., 2007). In contrast to this the RFEF's plan prioritizes both transparency and engagement. They recognize the significance of building trust through communication and collaboration with stakeholders.

Challenges and considerations arise when navigating the path for the RFEF's speech and communication plan. The success of this plan depends on how it is executed and whether or not the organization can genuinely demonstrate its commitment, to its stated values. Creating a transparent message across all platforms while engaging in open conversations with stakeholders is vital to ensure that the actions taken by the RFEF are seen as genuine and not just for show. Additionally, it's crucial for the plan to be adaptable and able to respond to developments and changing stakeholder expectations.

The RFEF's speech and communication plan provides a crafted roadmap for navigating the aftermath of a crisis and rebuilding trust among fans, players and the Spanish public. By using stylistic language choices, persuasive language and focusing on transparency, diversity and accountability; the plan aligns itself with established crisis communication theories while also demonstrating a proactive and forward-thinking approach. This comprehensive strategy has the potential not just to restore trust in the RFEF but also reignite the passion, for Spanish football that once burned so brightly.