

7. Communication, Digital age

New digital tools provide imperative opportunities and changes especially for an international organization like BPW

The occurrence of the fax gadget, at the beginning of the 90ties, already made a big difference compared to the snail mail contacts before. But the digital revolution which provides communication for free puts BPW on a new plane and up until today we have not taken the time necessary to look very carefully at the new opportunities available to it. This job is still ahead of us. It is not about using all the tools available, a flood of information doesn't make the change. On the contrary, **WHAT** we want to communicate and **HOW** we will do it, will be the main question. What we communicate has to be to the point, concise, clear and of good technical quality. A livestream video from a Summit taken by a mobile camera fixed on a tripod on a table would not serve the purpose well. Using social media is entertaining for private use but with its flood of unimportant information it is inappropriate for BPW.

BPW needs to test different tools and find a **tailored made solution for our digital communication**. It cannot be done by just using current tools available and flooding members with information. Time and hard work will be necessary to produce clear, concise messages which cannot be done by just communicating everything. Time and work will still need to be invested in thinking and focussing on the flow of information, with or without digital tools. However the digital age does offers new, great and very valuable working tools such as the website which not only communicates actual issues, but becomes the basic working tool for BPW. The website must contain all the clearly organized information necessary for the many different needs. Many other new digital tools wait to be tested, developed and integrated.

7.1 Website

Compared to businesses, where a website has to attract and inform clients, the role of the BPW website is much more complex, demanding and important. Apart from the constitution the website is the most important working tool for BPW. It is an information, communication, organisation and library tool all in one. BPW has to offer its voluntary working leaders and members a tool with which they can have all the information at their fingertips. Therefore like in a fact book for a quick and distinct orientation the different chapters and many subchapters have to be categorized. Organizing, developing and updating a smart website, with focused text and links, is a huge job. A good webmaster is only a minor part of the job, the more important part is having adequate, concentrated, complete and up-to-date BPW information in a very concise form. This crucial and special task should be done by a **website content coordinator, paid expert** who works very closely with the President, has a very good knowledge of BPW, collects all texts, takes control and is responsible for the updates.

7.2 E-mail addresses and e-mail etiquette

The use of the e-mail address xy@bpw-international.org is a basic promotional tool. Not using it is a missed opportunity. Having a BPW business card is one thing, but the bpw e-mail address is even more important. Today name and e-mail address goes together and is stored on the e-mail list of each PC, on lists of participants, on each letter etc. Promoting hotmail, gmail, is not a smart idea and arguing that e-mail accounts are not safe does not get to the root of the problem. Finding a reliable server is an important leadership task. Using different e-mail addresses is very common, but not using a bpw-e-mail address as a BPW leader means just ignoring a basic PR opportunity.

E-mail etiquette: In a large organization where leaders and administrators get many e-mails a day, it is important that e-mails are very clear, short and to the point. Crucial information in a message is the name and function of the sender.

7.3 BPW E–News

Compared to times, when BPW International NEWS had to be printed, they were serious expense factors and the editor had a huge role in choosing and editing the text due to limited space. The advantages in using digital media are endless.

If a person who doesn't know anything about BPW reads the heading "BPW E-News" the title makes no sense. If the title were "BPW International E-NEWS" it would alert the reader that it is "international" and may have some importance. The label "BPW International NEWS" has been used for PR reasons and therefore, it would be consistent to use "BPW International E-News".

7.4 Online Meetings

Digital conference tools seduces one to not prepare an agenda and meeting properly. Leading a Skype meeting requires more preparation work and discipline than a face to face meeting. Here too, to be flooded by information and copying again and again doesn't support an efficient working model but irritates and creates confusion. Online meetings have to focus on well-defined issues and the chair is responsible to keep the discussion moving and the chatting minimized.

7.5 Online Conferences

Livestreaming conferences, seminars or events is an important tool. But livestreaming such events requires adequate technical equipment and a guidebook. Livestreaming a seminar or a conference makes sense but requires a demanding teamwork and cannot be done by a mobile video.

7.6 Webinars

Webinars are an ideal information and further education tool. Graduated Women International uses webinars quite frequently. They have established a communication centre with experts who are responsible for the technical part and the communication in context with the different events.

7.7 Online Competence Centre

Today an Online Competence Centre for an organization with our goal is a very important tool. **What** is not good for BPW is to call such a centre an "Academy" for the following reasons

- In our society "academy" means a place where education and research follow **well-defined academic rules**. Persons with academic degrees are academics, which is a well-defined term too. A BPW online learning centre doesn't fulfil any of the tasks of a true academy. Using the wrong name is disrespectful and ignorant.
- It is well-known that businesses which do not work in academic fields use the word "academy" for their further education centres. Therefore one can find "academies" for beauticians, cooks, plumbers etc. These professions or institutions **use the name "academy" to upgrade their value, in fact a bluff**. Bluffing is part of PR in business

and good for shows and short term initiatives but BPW is neither a business nor a show but an organization with a very demanding goal where bluff is poison.

- The main argument why “academy” is the most incorrect term is because **BPW is the best place where “no-intellectual” or “non-academic” competences can be learned and trained.** Whereas leadership schools and trainings can teach the “know how” of leadership, the intellectual part, BPW offers the best platform for learning the “know how” which is a big difference as it involves our emotional system. Emotional competences cannot be learned intellectually. It is good to know intellectually what emotional reaction would be best, but as we all know, emotions can finally not be controlled by the mind. That is why BPW is such a valuable place not only to train emotional competences which are basic for good leadership but also because equal opportunity relies on individual who have good emotional competences. See TEXT “BPW treasures”. Using a name which contradicts the USP of BPW is not only stupid but destructive.
- The argument that many businesses use the expression “academy” and Google shows more than a million registrations is not a good argument. There was a time when a majority of humans were convinced that the sun revolves around the earth. Another reason could be that being a chair of an “online academy” could brush up an ego much better than being a chair of a “Competence Centre”. It is a decision between show and bluff or truth and respect.

7.8 Social Media

Social Media are good for private and political use. For the organization BPW, up to now, more focussed tools offer better services. But more observations and experiences are requested on all levels of our organization.

7.9 Importance of “One Name and One Logo

In context with the digital tools using one name and one logo is imperative. Even one single common name and logo should be self-evident. There are still Clubs and Federations who do not respect the rule. The international President, the Membership Chair, the Secretary and all Regional Coordinators should feel responsible for the implementation of this rule and explain to the presidents of Clubs or Federations who create their own logos why a cooperative identity is basic. Women obviously like to furnish each project with a special label. But unfortunately a variety of labels damages the perception of BPW. There are plenty of other areas in BPW where creativity is very welcome.

7.10 Languages Translations

Although the challenge of multiple language still exists, the digital age brings many opportunities for members to get and to spread information.

See also **5.13 Members - Languages**

As only a quarter of our members have English as their first language, the language issue is an important one. Not being able to understand, to speak or to write English properly not only feels like a handicap, but reading and writing requires a lot of energy and time. Despite of the fact that BPW has 4 official languages and only the most important texts get translated, the usual communication being English is very time consuming for all those who do not speak and write English fluently.

English speaking members should be very aware of these facts. Being patient, not speaking too quickly but clearly, using a simple vocabulary and writing short texts is of great importance.

The 4 official languages are a considerable financial investment for BPW especially for the International Congress Budget. Beside the salaries for the translations, the costs for the interpreters and their technical equipment exceeds 100'000 US\$.

Translations and interpreters are very expensive but the digital age offers online services which have to be tested not only for events like International Congress, Regional Conferences and Leaders' Summits but for all events where BPW members with different first languages meet.

© Dr. Antoinette Rüegg, Zürich 2018