Coronavirus Tips for Hosting an Event

The Coronavirus pandemic has left communications professionals searching for ways to adjust to this new normal when planning press events. Engaging reporters in a new, innovative outcome-driven way has never been as challenging. However, some best practices never change – like press events being among the most strategic opportunities to interact with reporters. Below are some tips for how to host (or coordinate) an effective press event in your area during the pandemic.

1. **Determine your goals.** Determine what your main communications goals are for the event and who your intended audience is for that message.
2. **Remember your key messages.** Review the campaign talking points in the toolkit and remember to adhere to the campaign's key messages.
3. **Be adaptable.** We are all adjusting to this "new normal." If you're hosting an in-person event, work with your venue to ensure proper health guidelines are being met. If you're hosting the event virtually, work through any logistics or technical specifications to ensure everything works smoothly in the moment.
4. **Prep your spokespeople.** Whether your spokespeople will be the governor, medical experts, or families who have experienced Coronavirus first-hand, it's important that each is ready and prepped to speak expertly on the topic.

In-Person Events:

It's important to create parameters for your event to ensure that all attendees can remain at least 6 feet apart from one another, can wear masks, and that they will not be in a situation to share food or objects.

1. Educate staff and attendees on when it's appropriate to stay home.
2. Require frequent employee handwashing and encourage attendees to wash hands often and cover coughs and sneezes.
3. Discourage physical touch (hand shaking, fist bumps, high fives).
4. Require the use of masks among staff and encourage attendees ahead of the event to bring an use masks at the event.
5. Ensure adequate and appropriate supplies to support healthy hygiene (paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, etc.)

For more tips on how to host a safe event during this time, visit the CDC's website here.

Virtual Events:

1. Send calendar planners to attendees. It's vital to have a visual reminder for attendees so they don't forget to join.
2. Rehearse. Coordinate a speaker practice prior to the event with the selected platform.
3. Conduct multiple tech rehearsals. Test your equipment. Make sure everything is working appropriately before the big day. Schedule a tech run-through with your speakers.

4. Turn on your webcam. There is no better way to disconnect with a virtual audience than for them to see you in real time.
5. Provide tools and resources. Just like an in-person press event, reporters will want handouts with information and data they can reference later. Be sure to email that information to all attendees either before or immediately following the event.