



My Working Day



My Working Day as a: Head of Media and Public Relations

Organisation: Merseytravel

Type of organisation: Transport Authority and Executive for Merseyside

Subject of study: Journalism, Public Relations and Media Relations

Job title: Head of Media and Public Relations

Job type: Middle Management

In which country are you currently working?: UK

What does your job involve?:

It is never the same day twice. The media is a rapidly moving, 24/7, demanding beast (and that is incredibly exciting) but it's important that me and my team are ready to respond to their demands and also have an influence on shaping their agenda. As an ex-journalist you know the sorts of pressures that these guys are under. I'm there to help.

We are a very small team handling all media and PR activity, including press, radio, TV and online for the whole organisation - acting as a one stop shop. As an organisation, we have a diverse portfolio of companies, from a German U-Boat to a Space-themed visitor attraction. We also handle the media and PR for the Mersey Tunnels, Mersey Ferries, Merseytram, Merseyrail Electrics and our elements of the bus and rail networks. As well as a raft of partnership activities we are involved with. Too many to list!

It is not a 9-5 operation, my phone and blackberry are on 24/7, and we are responsive, rapid and proactive. We have to be. The reputation of our organisation is one of our most important assets.

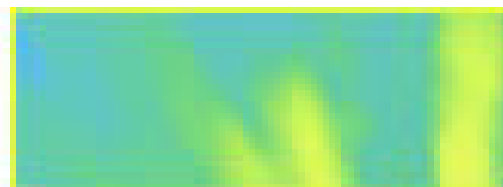
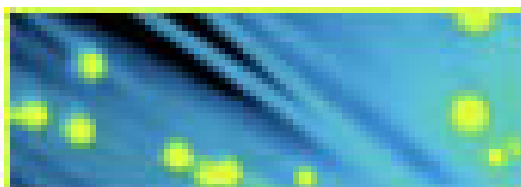
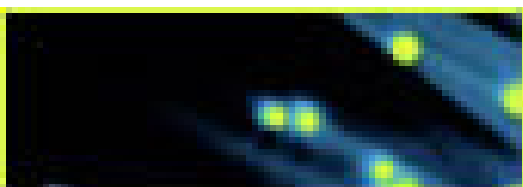
My typical day:

Anything can happen so you have to be ready. It makes the train journey (you'd expect me to say that!) into work more exciting! Several things that are a mainstay of my day are making sure we are fully up to speed with everything that is happening internationally and nationally (we scan read all the major newspapers and key online sites daily), regionally (we also read those things closer to home) and internally (through a range of communications methods).

We are always looking to develop positive, proactive news stories for the media, including photo ops etc. We write features, speeches, programmes, guides, etc so we have to adapt our style of writing. A lot of work also goes into the news stories that are not seen, which could be for a variety of reasons. We are always answering and advising journalists, PR agencies and others linked to our organisation on elements of our business and providing information about what we are doing on many projects and activities.

We are always planning the next big PR push, coming up with new and exciting ideas to generate goodwill about our organisation. We produce all internal communications. We handle all media monitoring and evaluation, online, in print and on broadcast. We also help organise events, conferences, activities etc

There's always something to do!



Three things that I like about my job:

- (1):** The variety, there's never a dull moment. If there was I'd have to turn it into something exciting.
- (2):** The cut and thrust of dealing with the media. The excitement of breaking a big news story is fantastic.
- (3):** The opportunity to deal with as many people as possible and be involved in the media "game".

Three things that I'm not quite so keen on:

- (1):** It's very difficult to sit down and develop strategies or long term projects as there is always (literally) things happen that compete for your time. You have to take yourself out of the environment to do this element of the role.
- (2):** It can be very stressful. Demands internally and externally are high and deadlines are tight. If you like that buzz you're on to a winner.
- (3):** You need a tough skin. Some of the time you have to deal with issues or people you'd rather leave to someone else! For example, I hate public speaking, but it is a requirement of the role and I throw myself into it.

Key points in my career development to date:

Becoming a journalist the day after I left university - I was offered the role during a placement from university and they held it until I completed my studies. Moving to Warrington Borough Council for my first PR role. My first taste of the 'dark side'! Moving to Liverpool with Merseytravel to develop and hone my skills.

What I wish I'd known when I was a student:

That nothing falls on your lap in the media and PR world if you don't truly throw yourself into the job and prepare to start by working long hours, for little money to get the job you want. Experience and theory are worlds apart, because the media environment has and is changing so quickly.

How well-regarded journalism, media and PR could be when it's done well. It is one of the cornerstones to any major organisation. How it would change in the last ten years. Social networking, blogs etc have become mainstream and more widely trusted - and consequently how quickly the media has had to adapt to that. How valuable journalism would be to me in the longer term.

Tips or advice for those looking for jobs:

Be creative with your job applications - it's a competitive business and you need to stand out. What sets you apart? What is your USP (unique selling point)? Make contacts, use them, build relationships - even when you're not looking for jobs. It all helps in the long term.

Be prepared to make short term sacrifices.

Firstly in cash terms, don't chase the money, take the right steps to the job you really want. The alternative is wasted time and effort.

Secondly, make time to expand your skills. Things are changing so quickly you have to adapt. Don't be content to rest on your laurels.

It won't fall on your lap. Be prepared to stretch yourself and do things you find uncomfortable. It will help you become a stronger person and improve your abilities.

Don't hide behind email. Get my name and title right. The alternative is the bin!

