

What is the future of think tank comms?

Fri 26 April 2013, for SMF at ODI

Richard Darlington

IPPR Head of News

Structure of this talk

IPPR



The birth of the think tank

1831 - RUSI

1884 - Fabian Society

1916 - Brookings Institution

1960 – ODI

1986 – NEF (the think-and-do-tank)

1988 – IPPR (Tony Blair's favourite think tank by 1994)

1989 – SMF (founded by David Owen at the end of the SDP + John Major's favourite think tank by 1995)

2012 – Guerilla Policy (the death of the think tank)

Why IPPR?

IPPR



@RDarlo #WonkComms

Think tank comms **past**



1) Publication/Web:

- Reports – hardcopies & sold (£) online

2) Events/Fundraising:

Dissemination events – invite only, panels & in London

3) Media relations:

- Press coverage – Guardian exclusives
- Broadcast coverage – Today & Newsnight

Newspapers are **not** dead

- In 2000, Tele was selling 1 million a day, now 555k. Gdn from 409k to 209k. Indy from 222k to 71k (@Owen Jones84 = 103k followers)
- Sun has gone from 3.5m to 2.4m, Mirror from 2m to 1m. Mail from 2.5m to 1.8m.
- Express has gone from 4.5m in 1964 to 529k.

But: ***FT has more digital subscribers than ever bought the paper*** (602k). 127k to Times, 118k Sunday Times & 45k to the Sun.

Think tank comms **present**

- Right-wing press coverage for left-wing think tanks
- Bank Holidays & Parliament's recess – planning grid*
- Trailing – more than one bit of the cherry*
- Profile coverage vs influential coverage*
- Blogs – guest post vs cross post
- Twitter – mainstreamed, staff personal handles

Browse categories · Find friends

- Trends · Change
- #TarantinosDjango Promoted
 - RPI
 - LBC
 - #RedEye
 - LoC
 - Nick Boles
 - #CallClegg
 - ONS
 - Justin Timberlake
 - #SixWordFilmPlots

© 2013 Twitter About Help Terms Privacy
 Blog Status Apps Resources Jobs
 Advertisers Businesses Media Developers

@hannahkuchler what are you going to call him?
 View conversation

Nick Faith @nickfaith82 2h
 The Sun reports our findings that the poorest kids are 16 months behind the richest in terms of vocabulary due to lack of decent childcare
 Expand

Gary Rae @gary_rae 1h
 @nickfaith82 do you have a link to your report, please?
 Expand

Nick Faith @nickfaith82 1h
 @gary_rae full report not out until end of month. we're trailing findings today
 Expand Reply Retweet Favorite

Gary Rae @gary_rae 1h
 @nickfaith82 Thanks Nick. We'll keep a look out for this.
 Hide conversation Reply Retweet Favorite

12:58 AM - 10 Jan 13 · Details

Reply to @gary_rae @nickfaith82

Gary Rae @gary_rae 1h
 @nickfaith82 do you have a link to your report, please?
 View conversation

The Grid



Dec 2012	Mon 3 – Sun 9	Mon 10 – Sun 16	Mon 17 – Sun 23	Mon 24 - Sun 30	TBC
	Reg away	14 Darlo on leave	22 Ellie away – 7 Jan 20 Tim in Austria – 28 21-16 Imogen away	Darlo on duty 22-29 Tim on duty 30-1	
External news	Weds 5: Autumn Statement + Cameron EU speech	11: Census data & Ed M immigration speech (Sarah) 12: Unemployment (inc nationality breakdown) 13-14: EU Council (Fiscal compact)	19: Energy Bill 21-7 Recess	Fri 28: Clegg: Women and the Banks Recess	
ippr stories	Wealth taxes story (Kayte) Fiscal targets story (Tony) Social Exclusion under New Labour (Clare) - Randeep Ramesh / Progress & C&YPN SBT (Social Business (Marc/Imogen) PAPER Sun 9: Housing – Observer, Lucy Rock	Mon 10: unemployment story Mon 10: Housing & Young People Waives (Jenny/Dalia) PAPER – Spectator blog / ES / BBC London Juncture: Heather Boushey - Staggers Juncture: Jon Curtice: Europe – ConHome	Mon 17: Fuel Poverty (Reg) PAPER 17: Juncture: Mike Kenny - Staggers Thurs 20: Juncture: Jackson - LabourList Updated Spending Review slides (Kayte) Sat 22: Banker bonus (Kayte/Graeme) OUT Sun 23: WAAGs story (Dalia) OUT	Thurs 27 Juncture: Reich Kamark Fri 28: Living Wage story (Kayte) Sun 30: Migration 2013 (Sarah) – Spectator blog OUT	
ippr events	5 YP unemp 6 Food Security WI (Glenn) York	Mon 10: Dromey/Prisk Tues 11: Families Symposium (Dalia) Tues 11: Fuel Poverty			
ippr North	Thurs 6: #IPPRHE – Willetts & Siobanha (Rick)				

@RDarlo #WonkComms

Profile: wall-to-wall



5 steps to changing the world



- 1) Get some headlines
- 2) Start a debate
- 3) Support civil society campaign
- 4) Provoke politicians
- 5) Persuade [govt] to implement

What will be think tank comms **future?**

Depends what is 'essential' & what could change

- Think tanks are **elite** projects & always will be
- Even 'leading' think tanks **don't lead**, we follow
- **Authenticity** is everything
- Consumers won't find products, products will find consumers (corporate/private sector insight)

The 'pyramid of engagement'

RT

Tweet

Read a blog

Scan exec summary

Print & read the full final report

Attend invite only dissemination event

The 4th element (staffing)

- 1) Publications / Our website
- 2) Events / Fundraising
- 3) Media relations / Press office

- 4) **Digital** content creation, social media, info-graphics, animations, film & video, citizen journalism

2 examples

CAP – 6 min Prezi powered video:

<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/news/2013/02/21/54126/middle-out-economics-101>



IPPR - 1min animation:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCiGU-J8vxc&list=FLK8bnqASv4NQTSjGJh6awZw&index=5>



What should think tanks do **next**?

- Even 'leading' think tanks don't lead, we follow → emulate, don't try to invent
- Better an early adopter than a first mover -> find the tipping point
- 'Consumers won't find products, products will find them' -> is old school philosophy of think tank [old] media relations
- So we should: experiment, measure, evaluate, evolve (get in quick, get out quicker)

