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Name

Mark Borkowski

Topics and Title

PR Guru & Business Speaker

Background History

Mark Borkowski's face is known to millions. They might not be able to pronounce his name (bor-cough-ski) but he's the man they see on their widescreen plasma TVs when producers need authoritative comment on scandals, celebrity and the media itself. They might seek his opinion on the latest reality TV shock-horror story, Britney's latest 48-hour marriage, or even a misconceived breast-revealing Superbowl stunt. Whenever the celebrity news agenda hits hysteria point, Mark offers thoughtful analysis, a wry point of view and an insider's insight.

That insight is drawn from hard-won experience. He's no academic observer of the media and its celebrity machinations: he's in it, up to his neck, every day. This is the man who has handled PR for some of the biggest names in the business and continues to do so. He's worked for Eddie Izzard, Graham Norton, Joan Rivers, Macaulay Culkin, Sir Cliff Richard, Shirley Bassey, the Bolshoi Ballet, Cirque du Soleil, the Three Tenors, and that trio of Michaels (who sound like a firm of provincial solicitors) Jackson, Flatley & Moore. His roster of the rich and famous even extends to Mikhael Gorbachev and Diego Maradona.

He's also publicised some of the best TV drama series over the past decade – including Spooks, Our Friends in the North, The Lakes, and 40, and he launched The Word, The Girlie Show, Never Mind the Buzzcocks and They Think It's All Over, at a time when everybody thought they were very bad ideas. In some cases they were right. He's been behind the high public profile of a string of West End successes, and his portfolio of film promotion includes cult classics such as American History X and Best in Show, as well as multi-million-dollar box office hits like The Matrix. When mounting a major propaganda drive to secure £60 million of lottery funding, it was to Mark that the Royal Albert Hall turned for advice.

Areas of Expertise

What distinguishes Mark from other publicists is the showmanship of his ideas. This is a man who has commissioned interviews with tap-dancing dogs, publicly auditioned parrots, cats and crocodiles, and was once frog-marched from the BBC for letting scorpions loose in a Green Room. There's more; cow pat flinging competitions, sword-fighting workshops with Douglas Fairbanks, driving cars on two

wheels across the Albert Bridge, an Action Man party in an NCP car park, a Vivienne Westwood dress for a doll, and a ballet for radio-controlled vacuum cleaners.

Today, the agency's clients choose Mark for his particular understanding of the way consumer brands operate. Borkowski represent major brand names including Vodafone, Virgin Megastores and Harrods and are experts in revamping "heritage English brands" including Horlicks, Hovis and Thorntons.

Mark lectures widely on PR and celebrity issues to business and academic audiences.

He also appears regularly on TV and Radio such as Today, Broadcast, Radio 5 Live, CNN, Fox News, SKY News and GMTV. In print he contributes weekly media and celebrity comment to *The Guardian* via his "Stuntwatch" column, as well as pieces in *The Independent*, *The Independent on Sunday*, *Campaign* and *Marketing*. Mark has been interviewed for a stream of documentaries in the UK, giving an insiders insight into celebrity, media and political issues. In the spring of 2004 Mark presented the BBC 3 documentary *How The War Was Spun* on the use of censorship and cover-up during the 2nd Gulf War.

He went on to scale new heights of extreme entertainment by publicising Jim Rose's S&M Circus Sideshow, in which a selection of freaks dangled breeze blocks from nipple rings, hung flat irons from their penises, ate light bulbs and cockroaches and persuaded audience members to drink the regurgitated contents of their own stomachs. Though Jim is notably dissimilar from Jeremy Paxman, they share the same opinion of Mark. "He is the greatest publicist I know" says Jim, a man ready to hammer a nail into his head at the drop of a hat.

Mark views PR as an instinctive, spontaneous, totally creative business whose sole function is to fire the imagination of the reading and viewing public.

Anything, in fact, just so long as it gains the column inches that attract attention and bring punters to the box office, or as the great showman Silas Bent once put it, "if there's no excitement ready made, some must be invented".

The widely held belief that PR should be about the absolute, rigid, undeviating control of a message is anathema to him. The message, he believes, can only be properly communicated by stirring the imagination, and ultimately what stirs the imagination more than anything else is the ability to conceive and tell a great story. In that sense it would not be too high-flown to say that Mark Borkowski regards PR as an art form in itself.