

### **Role at Wikimedia Foundation**

- This is an atypical environment. From a business communications perspective, in theory, the volunteers are all part of the internal communications function; in practice, that's impractical, but we don't have a complete method of communication with all of the volunteers.
- Communication is a value at WMF; it's essential; nothing can move forward unless we talk about it
- My focus has really been on the external communications – to users, media, storytellers, external stakeholders, although in an optimal situation I would like to have a robust communication system among volunteers, editors, chapters as well
- When we sign a deal, our partners have expectations that we'll communicate this; they want to associate with our brand; we need to make sure relationships with businesses, funders, in-kind donors are successful.

### **Relationship with chapters and community members on PR/communications**

- I have a healthy relationship with chapters on communications. Basic operating principle is "assume good faith." Need to make sure chapters feel included, that they can participate, we can collaborate on simple things
- There is a communications committee mailing list that I use to reach out to the chapters; let them know what's going on, what they need to be informed
- Issue is that chapters are at different stages; we want to facilitate their success, give them tools (design templates, information they can use to tell their story)
- I can't promise every service to the chapters; every chapter has a PR communications person – although it's not required. I do outreach and let them know what's going on; I'll help them by providing examples and formats for press releases; can't sustainably provide specific coaching or support on writing press releases
- Even if we had a "college of communications" so that they could get trained – that would not be the right solution; it's not practical; there are cultural and language differences in terms of what's appropriate for PR and communications in different countries and cultures. There isn't one way to do PR around the world.
- It's not just about writing down best practices and putting it on a wiki – it's about the foundation taking a leadership role, doing big important things and sharing how we did it
- There was a previous era of communications within Wikimedia where communications was more collaboratively done—writing press releases as collaborative exercise. When I started I wanted to change this approach – put the Foundation more directly in a leadership role for driving its own communications. This may have offended some people, perhaps robbed them of something they

like to do, but for professional communications it's about the power and legacy of the brand. We need to honor and protect this. We went from groupthink and construction to a more traditional communications operation think. One or two people driving the main message with lots of collaboration.

- Experience on the Orange deal is a success. We needed to have people on the ground in France to make the deal work. Members were very critical to the success of this. We needed people who speak French talking to a big business there. This was a big responsibility. The chapter is invested in this; they are helping to build something great. There is a natural risk handing it over to volunteers (to folks who aren't paid to assume risk) – but we don't have the people on the ground. We are assuming good faith, trusting people to do good work, and they do. Similar situations are playing out with the Polish and UK chapters.
- Without a chapter on the ground, this would be more difficult. For example, we don't have a chapter in Spain. We can't go in there for a partnership deal; we need people on the ground. Now working with PR people in Japan, where there is no chapter. This is more challenging.

#### **Constraints on PR/Communications capacity**

- Need to have more capacity to do media monitoring; we need to know what's being said about our brand and Wikipedia. There are negative perceptions of Wikipedia on the rise, and we need intelligence on that
- We are trying to get ahead of the story, and we are doing that more and more
- We could easily get additional capacity – form a cadre of 5 or 6 communications executives to provide pro bono support. We could form an advisory group specifically for communications; we don't need to do all this work in house, but it requires cultivating and managing those relationships. With the power of our brand, there is nothing we could not get done. It would take 0.25 FTE to serve these folks, to truly engage them well. This would be in line with our story and brand – create a collaborative environment, invite them in to help with the movement.
- We get pulled between two worlds – we have the communications department of a small nonprofit, but we are a top 5 website.