

RELEASE IN FULL

MISSION GERMANY

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE

PA Germany is losing one-third of its budget and almost one-third of its LES staff. That's tough – especially last month when we handed out the RIF notices – but it is also a tremendous opportunity. It has given us a chance to rethink, redefine and restructure our entire operation.

In moving ahead, we are not taking a “same as before but less” approach. Rather than taking off slices here and there, we are fundamentally reshaping PA Germany. At the heart of this process there are three basic questions: What are our goals? What are the audiences we need to connect with to achieve those goals? Which PD tools are most effective in reaching those audiences? The answers to those questions tell us what we need to be doing and how we should deploy our money and staff. And we are deploying accordingly, determined to make ourselves even stronger than we were before in the activity sectors that are crucial.

Our goals are clearly defined in Mission Germany's MSRP. At a June 2-3 offsite in Hamburg chaired by the DCM, a Mission Germany PD team that included the Consuls General focused intensively on identifying the key audiences we need to reach in order to achieve those goals and the PD tools that have the greatest impact on those audiences. Yes, that is something that all Public Affairs sections around the world do on an ongoing basis, but – knowing that our resources are shrinking by a third – our analysis of what is essential and what is not is particularly hard-edged and rigorous.

A central aspect of this process is identifying the activities that need to be pared down or eliminated. Justifications such as “we've always done that” or “audiences like it” are not sufficient. It's not about what we have always done, it's about what we need to be doing now and in the coming years. And, while it is always nice when people respond positively to our efforts, the reality is this: if it is not an audience that is closely linked to one of our goals, there is no justification for the expenditure of staff time and money.

As we go about reinventing PA Germany, we need to strike the right balance between our highly focused work in support of specific U.S. policy goals and our longer term efforts to strengthen understanding for U.S. culture and values, recognizing that those two areas of emphasis often flow into each other (the get-together with high school students that turns into a discussion of Afghanistan; the key staffer who is accessible to us because she is a Fulbright alumna, etc.).

It is essential that we get this right because Germany matters for the U.S. Germany is one of our strongest, most capable partners and is crucial to achieving successful outcomes on the most significant foreign policy issues our country faces. Afghanistan, Iran, Middle East peace, financial regulation, economic growth, climate change, non-proliferation, counterterrorism – with each one of these issues, positive German engagement is vitally important. And, in addition to its value as a bilateral partner, Germany is the engine that drives core institutions of European policy, not only in the traditional councils of Brussels, NATO, and the UN, but also now in the newly empowered European Parliament. It is the indispensable power behind European economic, security, and political affairs. Germany's relationship with the United States sets the tone and outlines the scope for how the United States interacts with Europe.

The restructuring of PA Germany is all about prioritization and the tough choices that it involves. In thinking about our priorities, it is clear that engaging youth is very high on the list. That is true worldwide, but there are specific circumstances in Germany that make it essential that we connect with young people and help them see that a close relationship between the U.S. and Germany has relevance for their lives. In the 20 years since the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Wall and against the background of eight years during which the image of America was severely tarnished, millions of young Germans have drifted away from us. We have a chance now to reverse that trend and we must make the most of it, but we can only do that if we systematically focus our efforts.

Key subsets of the German youth audience are immigrant youth and youth in eastern Germany. It is essential that we reach both those subgroups; if we fail to engage successfully with them it is very likely that as they enter adulthood negative attitudes toward the U.S. will harden into unchangeable convictions. (Among immigrant youth, which in Germany is largely synonymous with Muslim youth: the belief that the U.S. is hostile toward Islam; among young eastern Germans: the distorted image of America that they have inherited from their parents who grew up in a communist environment.)

As we work to focus our efforts for maximum impact, a central challenge is how much time to devote to fundamentally friendly audiences with which we have a long-established relationship, audiences that often tend to be older, non-immigrant and predominately male. We would be foolish to cut our ties to those people, many of whom are influential and have been with us for a long time. We cannot rebuff old friends, but neither can we overinvest in preaching to the choir. Youth, immigrants, women, eastern Germans – audiences that often greet us with deep skepticism – need to occupy a central place in our work.

The restructuring plan that we are implementing aims to:

- Eliminate stove piping. We are getting rid of the organizational and mental walls that separate (a) the three PD areas of activity (Press, Culture, Information Services) and (b) the six PD platforms in Germany (Embassy, five Consulates).
- Create the capacity to form issue-focused “campaign teams” closely integrating all areas of activity (Press, Culture, Information Services) and linking staff resources Mission-wide.
- Make optimum use of Social Media, recognizing that it has tremendous potential as a program enhancer and as a bridge to youth audiences, but it is not a silver bullet that can accomplish everything. Make sure American and local staff get substantial training in using Social Media.
- Identify thematic areas and/or support functions in which individual Consulates can play a lead role, leveraging the specific profiles of their districts and the specific talents of their staff. Learn from what the Mission’s Management section has accomplished in this area.
- Eliminate duplication of effort and create efficient mechanisms for sharing information and products. Our Mission-wide SharePoint site will play a key role in this.
- Identify products/activities that can be outsourced. Just because something is definitely worth doing does not mean it has to be done in-house.
- Bring the Information Resource function into the 21st century. Connect it to today’s key audiences and institutions; focus it on cutting-edge technology and media.
- Look for opportunities to build a LES team that reflects the diversity and youth of the audiences with whom we are engaging.
- Make the most of the ten German American Institutes (GAIs). With significantly less discretionary funding, we will have to make tough funding choices, but we need to keep supporting the GAIs and find low-cost (in terms of time and money) ways to maximize their impact.

We are well into the process of transforming ourselves. What is the endpoint we are heading toward? On one level, there is no endpoint. The environment in which we operate and the tools at our disposal are evolving rapidly and therefore the act of redefining and restructuring ourselves needs to be ongoing and open-ended. If we do not make continual revitalization of how we do business a key part of doing business, we will always be playing a hopeless game of catch-up.

What we do have now is a clear sense of (a) the focal points we will have for the foreseeable future and (b) the country-wide structure that will enable us to concentrate our resources on those focal points and achieve maximum impact. That structure, presented in the attached diagram, is based on the organizational goals and principles listed above. Above all, it embodies our commitment to prioritizing our efforts rigorously and working as a single unified team unencumbered by rigid organizational walls. We want to be quick, flexible and focused exclusively on what is most important.

A few notes about the diagram and the strategy it embodies:

- As indicated by the center element of the diagram, our strategy includes a robust capacity to participate in global or regional campaigns focused on specific issues.
- The general public, while not explicitly highlighted by the diagram, is an important audience and one which we reach with many of our PD tools such as media interviews and our website.
- As emphasized above, two important subsets of the youth audience are immigrant youth (which in Germany is primarily Muslim) and youth in eastern Germany.
- “Outreach to Schools, etc.” on the “Engage Youth” side of the diagram is shorthand for “Outreach to Schools and Other Institutions (including Libraries).” The specific importance attached to libraries as partner institutions ranges from high (Leipzig) to minimal (Munich) – one specific example of the significant regional differences in the PD landscape in Germany.
- “Content Development,” listed under “Research,” is shorthand for the conceptualizing, researching and drafting of material delivered to our key audiences in a variety of ways, above all via our website and various new media (Embassy Facebook page, blogs, webchats, videos posted on YouTube).
- “Professional relationships, the building and maintaining of contacts that are essential for PD work, is listed under “Influence Key Thinkers,” but in fact that activity also benefits our efforts to engage youth.

The diagram divides the totality of the work we do into 31 tasks. The PD LES staffing we will devote to each of those tasks is listed on the attached document (that information is also built into the electronic version of the diagram). Also attached is a document showing how our LES staff will be distributed (a) among the goals and functions listed on the diagram, and (b) among Mission Germany’s six public diplomacy platforms (Berlin and the five Consulates).

Attachments:

- Diagram: Mission Germany Public Diplomacy Strategy
- Mission Germany PD LES staffing: task-by-task
- Mission Germany PD LES staffing: by goal and geographically