



Rebellious PR & Consulting

COVID-19 Best Practices & Resources

PR & Crisis Management for Roller Derby Leagues

Key Takeaways:

- How leaders act right now reflects directly on your league's **reputation**
- **How leaders act right now will directly impact your league's longevity after this ends.**
- There are two separate efforts of communication: Internal (your league members) and external (your fans, the derby community). How you communicate with them is not the same.

Outline of items discussed in the PR office hours on 3/30:

- **Internal Comms + Intraleague Management:** Be human right now.
 - Check in on your members financial health AND mental health, they are not the same.
 - Keeping your members engaged is important. They are your community, whether or not they are skating or paying dues right now.
 - Find ways to support and value what people are dealing with.
- **I'll never financially recover from this! But really, what about league finances?**
 - This is hard! We're all in different places with our league size and access to resources.
 - Most leagues charge dues because it supports operation expenses.
 - Many places have suggested suspending dues. If you can, that's awesome. Do it. But if you have a permanent facility and rent doesn't disappear, it is your leadership's job to assess your budget and determine what your options are.
 - Work with your members to figure out who is impacted in what ways.
 - Consider sending a financial health survey that can be anonymous to find out what % of your members are financially insecure or have lost their jobs due to the crisis.
 - This will inform your leadership decisions and adjustments of budget for 2020 and beyond.
 - Once you know what you're able to maintain financially, reach out to your landlord to discuss options for paying partial rent, delaying payment, or some other arrangement.
 - Many places are refusing eviction enforcements for commercial and residential properties. Look up what your local governments are doing to support businesses right now.
 - Assess if you can freeze any expenses (water, power, wifi, etc)



Something to remember when you feel anxiety about losing what you've built:

Roller derby started as a dream that took shape in parking lots, parks, and gyms across the world. Many of the founders of leagues started with \$0 and barely enough people for a pack, and look what you've grown!

Our by-roller-derby-for-roller-derby growth will benefit us at this time, when not even infrastructure can protect other sports. We will be here, even if it's not the same.

- **Let's talk about communication around emotions right now**
 - Everyone will process this collective trauma differently. Job or not, everyone is experiencing some emotional insecurity or impact in some way.
 - The MOST important thing right now is supporting your members. Again -- They are your community, whether or not they are skating or paying dues right now.
 - Create a way for your community to help each other and grow the emotional bonds. A mental health survey can help leadership identify what your community/teams need in order to stay engaged with each other.
 - Circulating a spreadsheet of what people NEED and what people can GIVE right now. Does a student need a computer? Maybe someone has an old one to give or loan.
 - Create spaces for your people!
 - Start a league zoom account that anyone can use - a hangout room that people can pop in and out of if they want to chat with a pal or play a game
 - Have a team Houseparty night to play Heads Up!
 - Start a league TikTok and post videos!
 - Plan social media takeovers and show how skaters are doing quarantine at home!
 - Buddy system. Make sure someone is checking on everyone - people process things differently, try to notice if someone isn't present.
 - WFTDA also has put together a page for [Wellness Tips & Resources](#) from within the community, plus an additional page with lots of amazing links to workouts, ideas, videos, and derby fun.
<https://resources.wftda.org/covid-19/covid-19-wellness-stay-healthy/>
- **External Comms**
 - **What do I say about our public events? What do I say to fans?**
 - Loss of momentum, excitement, and revenue for your events is a bummer, but you are not alone. Trust me, everyone knows this is impacting you.



- Any person or any business who rely on events as their source of income are impacted, so we all collectively feel this sadness and disappointment.
- **Should I post on social media? Send a newsletter? Put out a press release?!**
 - NO PRESS RELEASES. Event cancelations are not news right now.
 - People are stressed, they probably don't need more messages about who is doing what during COVID-19 to be safe, unless it directly impacts them. They don't need to know how the roller derby league is staying safe.
 - What they do want is something GOOD or joyful, and to feel connected to their communities.
 - If you want to reach out externally to your community, it should be something helpful and community-focused:
 - Assure your fans and loved ones that you, and roller derby, aren't going anywhere
 - Share any fun, stress-relieving information you want to share. It's a stressful time for people.
 - Highlight healthcare heroes in your league and other workers on the front lines
 - Highlight any other efforts for good that your members are doing for the community; i.e. making masks, donating goods, etc.
- We can learn from the past while leaning into the future. Creativity and communication are key to weathering this storm. What you do today, will define who you are and what impact are you going to have.
- If a member of your league tests positive for COVID-19 and you feel it necessary to communicate this out, please email me directly to talk through options:
rachel@rebelliouspr.com

Some Non Roller Derby Resources:

- The founder & CEO of Rebellious PR, Evie Smith-Hatmaker. She is a PR pro of nearly 15 years -- first as a PR professional in Silicon Valley for 10 years before starting Rebellious, which just turned 4yo this month. Evie shares some really easily digestible tips [here](#) and on our podcast [here](#).
- The PR Insights Tool my company uses is called Meltwater. They are offering free access to their daily news and insights on COVID-19, you can sign up for this resource [here](#).
- [Free Tools, Resources, and Financial Help for Business Owners Hit by Covid-19](#) from Inc. Magazine
- [Roundup: COVID Social Media Updates for Communicators to Watch](#) from PR News Online



Roller Derby Resources:

- WFTDA's Town Hall [Q&A transcript](#)
- WFTDA Risk Management and the WFTDA Coronavirus Task Force have provided some [recommendations](#) to help your league implement good practices that help prevent the spread of illness, and a [template to help communicate](#) the recommendations to your members.
- WFTDA Ongoing Updates: <https://resources.wftda.org/covid-19/>
 - **This page includes the following important recommendations:**
 - Leagues should stay up-to-date with their national, regional, and local government warnings about the virus as situations can change rapidly and is location-dependent.
 - The World Health Organization posts frequent links and updates online: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
 - To cancel a sanctioned game contact WFTDA Sanctioning at sanctioning@wftda.com ASAP.

And last, one of my favorite daily updates:

“Plan the flight and fly the plan. But don't fall in love with the plan. Be open to a changing world and let go of the plan when necessary so that you can make a new plan” — Laurence Gonzales, [“Deep Survival”](#)

This is advice we must all now heed. And for those of you who have not read this unbelievable book, now may be the time.

It's going to take Herculean efforts for every sector to let go of what was, in order to find what might be. Here's a look at what leaders are doing to adapt quickly while maintaining stability in this time of great uncertainty.”

Stay well, roller derby friends! We're not going anywhere.

Email me anytime: rotten@wftda.com

-Rachel Rotten (aka Rachel Johnston, Publicist & Vice Prez & Senior Account Director at Rebellious PR & Consulting)